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Parsifal of Richard Wagner

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# PARSIFAL

LEGEND, DRAMA, PARTITION

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# THE PARCIFAL OF RICHARD WAGNER

WITH ACCOUNTS OF THE PERCEVAL  
OF CHRÉTIEN DE TROIES AND  
THE PARZIVAL OF WOLFRAM  
VON ESCHENBACH

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF  
MAURICE KUFFERATH

BY  
LOUISE M. HENERMANN

With the leading Motifs in  
Musical Notation and Illustrations of the Scenes  
at the Metropolitan Opera House

INTRODUCTION  
BY  
H. E. KREHBIEL

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HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1904

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*Dedicated*

TO

ANTON SEIDL

GREAT ARTIST; TRUE MAN.

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EARNEST EFFORTS TO  
INSPIRE HIS FELLOW BEINGS WITH A  
HIGHER KNOWLEDGE OF AND  
DEEPER REVERENCE FOR  
THE GENIUS OF

RICHARD WAGNER

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## INTRODUCTION.

IT is a pleasure for a student and admirer of the lyric dramas of Richard Wagner to comply with a request of the publishers to say a word of introduction for M. Kufferath's book on "Parsifal". The time is opportune; the occasion inviting; "Parsifal" deserves study, and M. Kufferath's book is the best single help to that study with which I am acquainted. No musical or dramatic composition has ever engrossed the attention of the cultured world as the swan-song of the great German poet-composer is now engrossing it.

The production of the work at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on December 24th, 1903, for the first time on any stage outside of the *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth, was the most notable occurrence compassed by the annals of the lyric stage in America, as the production itself was the most opulent and finished ever witnessed in this country. Many adventurous things helped to create and nourish the interest felt in that representation and the representations which have followed it; but the drama itself was the most potent of the helpful influences.

The large public needed only to become acquainted with "Parsifal", to recognize that it is a work which in

purpose, subject-matter, and manner of presentation stands apart, not only from all other operas, but also from the lyric dramas sprung from the same creative mind. When Wagner set aside the conventional word "opera" and substituted *Musikdrama* for it, he reverted to a term created by the Florentine inventors of this art-form; when he wrote "Parsifal", he invented for it an entirely new designation, namely, *Bühnenweihfestspiel*. This somewhat formidable compages of letters signifies in the vernacular: a play designed for the consecration of the (or a) stage. It is not difficult to arrive at the dramatist's purpose in so naming his work, when once the scope and significance of "Parsifal" are apprehended. Wagner was a sincere believer in the idea that the theatre might be made to occupy the place in the modern world that it did in the classic. If it was not to supplant the church, it was at least to take its place beside it and teach by direct preachments, as well as allegory, the philosophical notions which he thought essential to the salvation of humanity.) He had introduced some of these concepts into "Tristan und Isolde" and "Der Ring des Nibelungen"; but in these dramas they were concealed from the multitude by dramatic incident and picturesque integument which seemed a sufficient end in themselves. In formulating his final artistic message to mankind, he forsook the region in which he and all other modern dramatists had found the ordinary appeals to human interest to lie. For the chief element in his artistic and humanitarian evangel, he went to a system of philosophy which rests on the idea that the world is to be redeemed by negation of the will-to-live, the conquest of individual



desire. This conception finds its highest expression in the quietism or indifferentism of the old Brahmanic religion in which holiness is to be attained through an ascetic life of speculative contemplation. In Buddhism, which is reformed Brahmanism, there appears along with the old principle of self-erasure, which is all selfishness, a tender pity for the misfortunes of everything in nature. The life of Cakya-Muni exemplified the beauty of compassionate love, and so, in a much loftier and more tragical manner, did the life and death of Christ. The persons and teachings of both had addressed themselves as dramatic material to Wagner's mind, and had enlisted his labors long before he resolved to write a drama on the Quest of the Holy Grail. So it resulted that when he came to write "*Parsifal*", he had some thought-out material ready to hand, and he fused in it elements from two dramatic sketches—one of a Hindoo play which was to have been called "*The Victors*", the other of a Christian drama which was to have borne the title "*Jesus of Nazareth*".

In making this excursion I am not trying to anticipate anything in M. Kufferath's book, but only trying to raise a sort of observation-tower, from which it will be easy for the reader to see how necessary it was that so comprehensive a work as M. Kufferath's should be written about a single lyric drama; and I am not yet through. When Wagner wrought his play about the emblems of Christ's suffering and death, he accepted the Christian doctrine of the Atonement with all its mystical elements; for only in this way could he acquire for the Holy Grail and the Sacred Lance the symbolical significance necessary for the presentation of his dra-

matic scheme. In the minds of the poets who had treated the story before him, the Grail represented the highest ideal of Christian virtue, and its quest the highest duty of Christian knighthood. Thus to glorify his ethical principle he had at his command all the pomp and circumstance of the institutions of mediæval chivalry, and whatever pictures his fervent imagination could conjure up as an investment for the adoration of the relics of the Divine Passion; for he must have felt that no spectacle could be too gorgeous for his theme. Theme and presentation, however, were bound to cause troublesome and vexatious questions touching the proprieties in the case. These questions presented themselves when the drama was first brought forward in Germany, and again when the New York representations were projected. Moreover, they are likely to arise for generations to come, in the mind of every person given to thoughtful consideration of beautiful things, whose religious feelings are moved by study or contemplation of the drama. Let us be frank and confess that it is not easy to find the properest frame of mind in which to approach "*Parsifal*", for in it there are many things which are remote from the mental and emotional habits of us who live in the generation which saw its creation. It is therefore helpful, and even comforting, to know that there are elements in the work which were in existence long before Christian symbolism was grafted upon the old tales of the quest of a magic talisman, to which tales one may, if one wishes, reduce the dramatic factors of Wagner's religious drama.

It is, I hope, plain from what has been said, that if any work of dramatic art invites study and is likely to

repay it, it is "Parsifal". But what a field has been opened up! Who can hope to glean over even a corner of it? Not only is it too vast, it is also too varied for the ordinary student. Scholars have expended themselves on every one of its features. Its folk-lore carries us back into remote antiquity; its religion to times long antedating Christianity; its literature to the days of the bards of Wales, the *trouvères* of France, and the Minnesingers of Germany. It was necessary that a scholar should gather into a compendium the most important things discovered by the investigation of specialists, which throw light on Wagner's work, add to its charm, and present it lucidly, entertainingly, and convincingly to the many. This M. Kufferath has done. His book stands quite alone in the field of Wagneriana not only in respect of the interesting and graceful manner in which the subject is treated, but also in the dignity, seriousness, and comprehensiveness of the treatment. Naturally enough in his exposition of the musical score, he has gone for guidance, as every writer for the past two decades has done, to the *Leitfaden* of Hans von Wolzogen, who, when he explains the typical phrases, the manner of their employment and their symbolism, is nothing more nor less than the mouthpiece of the composer. But Kufferath makes many a pretty walk into by-paths which Wolzogen never knew. Moreover, analysis of the score, more or less technical, fills only one chapter of Kufferath's book; and that not the longest. More voluminous, more delightful, and equally valuable are the chapters devoted to vicissitudes of the Grail legend before Wagner seized upon it as dramatic material; the story of how the work grew in Wag-

ner's mind; the account of its first performance; the exposition of the philosophy of pity and its relation to Wagner's personal character and religious speculations; and, finally, the exposition of the drama itself.

For its purposes, the book has no adequate fellow in the literatures of England, France, or Germany. M. Kufferath brought a singularly large and admirable equipment to the task of its preparation. His German origin (the father and uncle of the author were distinguished German musicians, though their activities were spent chiefly in Belgium, Kufferath's father being a professor at the Conservatory at Brussels) lent him seriousness of purpose, sympathy with Wolfram von Eschenbach's poem, and the capacity for patient research; his French breeding and literary training (he studied the arts and philosophy at the university, and was long time editor of *Le Guide Musical*), deftness of touch and skill in narrative; his musical learning, capacity to understand and facility to expound Wagner's music. Love for Wagner's art, already evinced in earlier books from his pen (*La Théâtre de Wagner, Richard Wagner et la 9me Symphonie de Beethoven*, etc.), fired him with an enthusiasm which illumines nearly every page, and stamps with sincerity the sigh of regret with which he relinquishes his pen on the completion of his self-imposed task. Again I say, for its purposes, the book has no adequate fellow.

H. E. KREHBIEL.

NEW YORK, January 27, 1904.



# PARSIFAL.

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## THE LEGEND.

IN a country far away and inaccessible there is a sacred citadel by the name of Mont-salvat. A temple so brilliant that the whole earth has nothing to compare with it, rises there in its glory and splendor.

Within its inclosure, in the depth of the sanctuary, pious hearts worship, by night and by day, the holy chalice into which God poured his divine blood ; this vase was brought to the earth by angels, that it might be intrusted to the protection of pure and simple-hearted men.

Every year there descends from heaven a white dove to give new strength to its miraculous virtue. This vase is the Holy Grail. Whoever adores it and gives himself to its service is endowed with superhuman power. Wherever his destiny may lead him, the Grail will sustain him, whenever he combats for right and virtue.

But the power of the Grail is of such a nature that it vanishes as soon as it is revealed ; a severe law com-

mands the knights to remain unknown to the world ; if they reveal their rank, they lose their power, they have to depart at once and return to the holy mountain.

“ That is why I am going to leave you. I was sent to you by the Grail ; my father, Parsifal, is King of the Grail, and I, his knight, am called Lohengrin.” Thus says the knight of the swan at the moment when he is about to leave Elsa forever.

This narrative, which leads to the *dénouement* of Lohengrin, may, in a measure, serve as an introduction to Parsifal.

It defines the character and the place of the action. Only in *Parsifal* it is a youth simple of heart and mind whom we see struggling to attain the highest position and to become King of the Order of the Grail, while in Lohengrin it is a knight already in possession of superhuman power and accomplishing a divine mission, whose chivalric exploits are to us revealed. The subject of Parsifal, as those of Lohengrin, of Tristan and Yseult, and of Tannhäuser, have been borrowed by Wagner from the romances and the epic poems of the Middle Ages.

By a proceeding analogous to that of the troubadours, who drew the material of their legendary tales from the national chants and old traditions which had come to them either by oral or literary transmission, the master of Bayreuth has united and condensed in his drama the principal features of a whole series of med-

iaeval poems relating to Parsifal. These poems are numerous. The legend upon which they are founded has been made the subject-matter of a quantity of literary adaptations, both in verse and prose, not only in Germany, but also in England and France. It was in French, however, that it first appeared arrayed in the form of an epic poem, at the commencement of the twelfth century, and from thence it passed into the literature of nearly every European nation.

But, in fact, the fables which gave birth to the French *Perceval* were known much earlier than the twelfth century ; their origin is lost in antiquity. In addition to this, most of the Christian poems of the Middle Ages are in reality but transformations of ancient pagan myths, some derived from the East, from Greece and Italy ; others, and these are the more numerous, born upon the soil of ancient Gaul and of Germany, or imported from the North during the invasion of the Germanic tribes.

The romances referring to the Grail have their source in the ancient Gaelic or Celtic chants, religious hymns, war-chants, mythological songs, ballads which recited exploits of national heroes, and mystic invocations to the ancient divinities of Gaul, of pagan Armorica, and of the countries of Wales and Scotland.

Some of these chants have descended to our time, but much altered, probably by different versions and successive interpolations. We discover in them, through

mythological and historical allusions, the reminiscences of myths common to all the Indo-Aryan races. For example, the stories concerning the Grail have been connected with the history of a marvellous basin, filled with magic herbs, and endowed with a particular virtue, that of conferring the gift of wisdom and prophecy.

The cup of Hermes with the Egyptians, and the basket of the Dionysia\* in ancient Greece played a part very nearly analogous ; the same may be said of the sacred stone of the Arabs, which they preserve in the Kaaba† at Mecca. These are manifestations of a similar belief connected with the idea of a redemption after the Fall ; and this idea, in the course of centuries, was naturally subjected to the influence of interpolations and of the times, and became infinitely transformed. The vase, or basin, to which the ancient Gaelic chants refer, and which gave to those who possessed it superhuman power and the satisfaction of all their desires, has been intrusted from time immemorial

\* Festivals consecrated to Demeter and to Dionysius (Ceres and Bacchus).

† The Kaaba is an edifice of twelve metres square, erected in the principal mosque at Mecca, a sort of temple, which, according to tradition, was built by Abraham to serve him as an oratory. After the taking of Mecca, Mahomet destroyed the idols which had been introduced into the temple, and restored it to the worship of the true God. In the Kaaba is inclosed a black stone, toward which the Moslems must turn when at prayer, and which they kiss with profound respect.

to a famous warrior, while he was walking on the borders of a Scotch lake. A dwarf and a giant emerged from the waters and presented him with this precious gift. From that time he became all-powerful ; he was everywhere victorious. This magic basin, however, soon became the object of covetousness to all, and was thus the cause of many bloody struggles and murderous combats. In the Scandinavian Eddas the same vehement passions are kindled around the famous treasure of the Nibelungen—the Nibelungenhort.

This Celtic basin is probably the bowl in which the Druidic priestesses received the blood of the victims offered to the gods, and from which they drew omens.

The religious emblem soon became a symbolic object ; it revealed to its worshippers the knowledge of the future, the mystery of the world, the treasures of human knowledge, and it gave poetic inspiration. Like the objects of religious worship in all nations, it played a grand part in the history of the Celtic people, as well as later the host and the chalice did in the history of Christian peoples, wherever was celebrated the "sacrifice of the Mass." One may even ask if this emblem is not derived from the other. It is asserted that a great number of the practices of the Catholic Church have been derived directly from the ancient pagan beliefs and from the traditions of the Druidic cult.

When, after the first conversions in Gaul and England, the struggle ensued between the rival religious sects, between the Christian priest and the ancient Celtic bard, who was both priest and poet, another emblem was added to the ensanguined basin—the bloody lance—that weapon which symbolized at first the resistance to the conquering foreigners, and which afterward became the sacred emblem of the persecuted faith. Upon the lance the Celts swore eternal hate and death to the oppressors and persecutors of their religion. “The country of the Logriens\* will perish by the bloody lance,” sings the bard Taliésin (sixth century), and Chrétien de Troies repeats this prophecy in his *Perceval*:

It is written that there is an hour  
When the kingdom of Logres,  
Which formerly was the land of Ogres,  
Shall be destroyed by this lance.

As Christianity spread, these symbols changed in character and signification. The Church skilfully transformed to her profit all the traditions of the peoples whom she won over to the new faith. The Druidical basin became now the vessel in which was placed the head of St. John after his decapitation; now the basin in which Joseph of Arimathæa received, accord-

\* England.



ing to the legend, the blood which flowed from the wounds of Christ. The Druidic lance became

. . . . . the lance  
 With which Longis \* pierced the side  
 Of the King's holy Majesty.

The broken sword of Wotan, which Siegfried alone succeeded in repairing, that good sword which ever gave victory to him who was capable of wielding it, this weapon became eventually "the sword with which St. John was beheaded."

All the symbols of the ancient faith passed in this manner into the service of the new cult.

In like manner the struggles which in the ancient chants took place between the warriors for the possession of the marvellous chalice, the sacred lance, and the sword which gives victory, are gradually transformed, in the memory of the crusades, to heroic struggles for the possession of relics of the Saviour.

Among these relics there is one which, for nearly two centuries, has haunted the imagination of three or four generations, inspired all the poets, preoccupied princes and kings, been the cause of acute desire to all the disinherited—it is the Holy Grail. The linguists have lost themselves in conjectures upon the meaning and origin of this word *Grail*, which is not clearly ex-

\* Longis is the name given in the Middle Ages to the soldier who pierced Jesus's side with his lance while on the cross.

plained in any of the poems which treat of the subject. To the poets and readers of the twelfth century the Grail was a well-known subject which needed no definition.

During the Middle Ages the word Saint-Graal, or Sain-gral, was taken to be a corruption of sang réal, sang royal (royal blood), in allusion to the legend after which Joseph of Arimathæa was said to have received the blood of Christ, the King, into the same chalice which Jesus had used in consecrating the bread and the wine.

The legend describes this very chalice, handed down to the descendants of Joseph, and brought by them to Western Europe, where it became the source of innumerable benefits to those who possessed it. Others derive the word Graal from corail (coral), the Greek korallion, the Latin corallium. This is the argument of Mr. Gustave Oppert. And there is this much of plausibility about it, that it explains why, in the *Parzival* of Wolfram of Eschenbach, the Grail is a precious stone, brought in olden times to the earth by angels, and confided by them to the care of a religious brotherhood which called itself "the Chevaliers of the Graal." In the German poem upon the "Contest of the Singers at Wartburg" there is an allusion made to a luminous stone, fallen from the crown which the rebel angels had had made for Lucifer, and which had been torn from his forehead by the Archangel Michael. "This stone is the Grail," says the old poem. It has exactly the

same virtues as the Druidic basin and the chalice of Joseph of Arimathæa.

A third version derives the word Graal from the Provençal patois, *grazal*, *grazan*, or *grial*, which is the same as *grasale* in Low-Latin, meaning literally dish, basin, or vase. M. Fauriel, the historian of Provençal poetry, has also found the word with this signification in the Basque language. This interpretation appears to us the most rational, for it not only accords with the historic and legendary ideas, but is etymologically the least complicated. Therefore it is at the present time the most generally accepted.

Whatever the true origin of the word, be it Oriental, Provençal, or Gaelic, it is certain that it appears for the first time in the French poems of the twelfth century, and that it designated sometimes a marvellous vase, sometimes a precious stone, or the chalice used by Jesus when consecrating the bread and wine, and then again the basin in which Joseph of Arimathæa (or of Abarmacie, according to some of the old chroniclers) received the blood of the Saviour. By the side of the Grail usually appear the sword of St. John and the bloody lance, and sometimes, but more rarely, fragments of the cross and the nails which pierced the hands and feet of Christ.

This is not all. Having assimilated the symbols of the ancient cult of the Gallo-Germans, the Church took possession also of the legendary types of the national

heroes in order to make of them defenders of the faith—sometimes martyrs and saints. Thus it is that Perceval, the perfect type of the Christian knight in the service of the Church and of the faith, is simply a derivative of Morvan, the hero of Bretagne, who, a short time after the death of Charlemagne, raised a revolt among the Bretons against Louis the Pious, and himself took the title of king. The secular legend has made of him the perfect type of the patriotic king devoted to his people. The Breton ballads relating to this person recount how Morvan was born of a widowed mother and was raised in the woods; how he met one day an armored knight whom he thought to be St. Michael, and how the taste for adventure was awakened within him. During ten years he travelled through the most distant countries, ever victorious; finally, coming back to his own country, he learned that his mother had died of grief when she saw him leaving her.

This is the same story, or nearly so, of the Welsh Perceval. How the legends relating to Morvan were transformed and became the romance of the Welsh Perceval, historical literature has not yet been able fully to explain. The English possess a very old legend which describes a child brought up like Morvan by his widowed mother, who, arriving at adolescence ignorant of the science of arms, soon became an expert in their use, and accomplished all sorts of miracles, putting to flight the witches of Gloucester, and reconquering a *basin in*

*which was found a bleeding head and lance.* He thus accomplished a prophecy which subordinated the deliverance of the country, and the end of a long series of crimes and acts of vengeance, to the return of these symbols into his power. The hero of this romance is called *Peredur*, which means *searcher for the basin*.

This *Peredur* might well be the prototype of the French *Perceval*. He presents, in effect, great analogies with him. There was found in the early French poems a large number of adventures absolutely identical with those of the Welsh romance. Only there exists of this but one manuscript copy of the fourteenth century, consequently much later than the French manuscripts of *Perceval*. From this fact have ensued among the historians and philologists endless discussions. For some, *Perceval* is only an amended French version of the Welsh *Peredur*; for the others, on the contrary, the *Peredur* is a British adaptation of the French poem, with which have been mixed local traditions, with the purpose of rendering it more sympathetic to English readers. This is the opinion of the learned editor of the German *Parzival*, Mr. Simrock.\* On the other hand, Messrs. de La Villemarqué and San Marte adhere to the priority of *Peredur*, if not in the form in which

\* The *Parzival* of Wolfram of Eschenbach, translated by Mr. Simrock, Appendix, Vol. II. The Romance of *Peredur* is found in the *Mabinogion*, or *Red Book*, a collection of Welsh romances published, after a manuscript of the fourteenth century, by Lady Charlotte Guest. London, 1849.

it has come to us, at least in its historical foundation. There is one probability in favor of this opinion, the acknowledgment of Chrétien de Troies, that he composed his poem after a book which Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders, loaned to him. Now, we know that this prince passed several months in England in 1172, that is to say, shortly before the time when is generally placed the composition of the Perceval by Chrétien. It must, moreover, be remarked that in the Peredur the Grail is not mentioned, but that the ensanguined basin and the Druidic lance, evidently more ancient than the Christian Grail, are the object and end of the adventure. There remains to be explained the transcription of Peredur to Perceval. M. de La Villemarqué admits that Perceval is a French translation of Peredur, but we do not perceive the affiliation between the two words. Peredur, as we have said, signifies searcher of the basin; the French name has no relation, either by its etymology or its sense, to the Welsh name. What does Perceval signify exactly?

The poets and prose writers of the Middle Ages have very variable opinions on the subject. Some say Perceval means he who passes through all, from *percer*, to pierce, and *val*, valley; whence the word *Perceforêt* (a determined huntsman), which was given later to Perceval; others call him Perlesvaux (through the valleys), and even the variation of Parluiset, or "for what he had done through himself." Thus says the author of



the Perceval in prose, of which the only manuscript has been published by M. Charles Potvin. This author thought that Parluiset might be the correct translation of the Latin : *per se valens*, Perseval. This interpretation has the merit of being in accord with the character of the hero, who was indebted to nothing but his natural qualities—"car il tenoit de nature," said Chrétien de Troies. In Germany a still more complicated explanation has been given. The philologist Goerres, connecting the whole legend of the Grail with oriental originals, derives the name of Perceval (Parzival in German) from the Arabic: *parseh*, pure, and *fal*, foolish, simple; Parzival then would be the guileless *pure* one, "the spotless simple-minded." Wagner has adopted this origin and this signification of the name. But there is a double inconvenience in this etymology: the first is that the German name Parzival has incontestably entered into the Germanic poesy through the medium of the French Perceval, where the two words *parseh* and *fal* could find no application; the second, and it is decisive, is that, according to the Arabists, the word *fal* does not exist in the Arabian.

Thus falls to the ground the whole philological edifice so laboriously raised by Goerres, and adapted, no one knows why, by Wagner. This quarrel, however, presents to us a certain interest in that it explains the orthography, *Parsifal*, adopted by the master of Bayreuth.

Whatever the facts may be about the priority of Peredur or of Perceval, that which is interesting in regard to the filiation and successive transformations of the original legend of Morvan is this, that in Peredur it is already mixed with another cycle of lays or Breton tales ; I allude to the chants referring to the noble and chivalrous king Artus.

Artus, or Arthur, also is a legendary hero : in the most ancient poems he and his counsellor, the bard Merlin, personify the resistance to the invaders, the Picts and Saxons, oppressors of the Himri. Arthur is not a person absolutely historic. He is a sort of exponent of the national traditions relative to the ancient Breton kings or chiefs. As to Merlin, he is a person half real, half legendary. It is certain that there once existed a bard of this name, and we have by him and other bards, his contemporaries, as Anieurin, Taliésén, Lywarch (sixth century), narrative, lyric, or didactic poems filled with dolorous allusions to their country, the family, and to the menaced Druidic religion, and with pathetic and touching regrets bestowed upon the heroes who fell in defence of their country.

Merlin appears to have been an ardent defender of the religion of the Druids, his poems are full of invectives against the Christian priests ; he calls the monks impostors, libertines, and rogues, and attributes to them all sorts of vices, even to gluttony.\* In the course

\* De La Villemarqué : *L'Enchanteur Merlin*.

of time the popular imagination made of Merlin a necromancer ; he became the Enchanter Merlin ; and in this new tradition we recognize once more the influence of the Church. In order to eradicate the ancient faith she threw suspicion upon those who exalted it. Merlin was said to have dealings with the devil, with the enemy ; he was accused of being a false prophet, a sorcerer.\* Even the court of King Arthur, after having been for a long time, with its knights of perfect virtue and of such refined courtesy, the ideal of kings and princes, became in the end nothing but a court where reigned voluptuousness and moral corruption. In passing from England into France these two orders of legends blended with a third cycle, that of the Brotherhood of the Christian Grail.

This legend is probably of Provençal origin : it certainly is in its Christian form. In the Pyrenees, upon the borders of Spain, the land of marvels, and also of the enemies of Christianity (the Moors), the Middle Ages placed the mountain where was erected the temple of the Grail : Montsalvat, a corruption of the Latin words *mons salvationis*, mountain of salvation ; or in

\* The monk Gildas, a contemporary of Merlin and author of a Latin chronicle of the Breton kings, launched all the thunders of his eloquence against the bards, and in particular against Merlin, to whose eternal honor it is to have remained passionately faithful to his king and to the national traditions, while the monk Gildas had placed himself in the service of a usurper sustained by foreign but Christian invaders. De La Villemarqué : L'Enchanteur Merlin.

the tongue of Provence, *mont saltvage*, which means wild. The most ancient poem known where these three cycles are united is the *Perceval*, by Chrétien of Troies.

We know very little of this remarkable poet, whose influence upon his contemporaries and upon all the literature of the Middle Ages was extraordinary. He was a native of Champagne, and he lived at different courts, that of Hainaut, of Flanders, and of Champagne; he was protected by the Countess Marie of Champagne, daughter of Louis VII. and of the Queen Aliénor; and later was much petted by Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders. This is nearly all we know of his life. The date of his death is not even known, but it is generally believed that it occurred before the end of the twelfth century, between 1191-1195.

To make amends for this we have more precise information on his works. Before putting into French verse that which is called "Matériel of Bretagne," that is to say, the Breton stories which have inspired so many epic poems and romances of adventures, from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, he had imitated the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, which tends to prove that he was a *clerk*, that is to say, a member of some religious community. He informs us himself that he had translated into French the episodes of Pelops and Philomela. Of these two poems the first is lost, the second has been recovered. Chrétien de Troies had, about 1160, com-

posed a "Tristan," which is lost; then "Erec," a Breton legend; "Cligès," the subject of which is borrowed from an ancient Oriental legend upon the wife of Solomon, abducted from her husband *by a ruse in which she is an accomplice*; the poet of Champagne mixes with them all sorts of fictions borrowed from Breton stories. Toward 1170 he wrote the "Story of the Cart; or, Lancelot of the Lake" (left unfinished), for which the Countess Marie de Champagne had furnished him the subject, and shortly afterward "Ivain; or, The Chevalier of the Lion." These two poems are drawn from Breton stories. Finally, toward 1175, he wrote his last and most important work, "Perceval the Gaul; or, The Story of the Grail"—after "a book," as he says himself, without doubt an Anglo-Norman poem, which had been lent to him by Philippe of Alsace, who, in 1172, had passed some months in England fighting against Henry II.\*

Chrétien passed, without doubt, in the eyes of the writers of his own epoch, as well as the succeeding century, for the best French poet, and his school continued nearly to the end of the fourteenth century. "L'Histoire littéraire de France," that grand monument raised by the Benedictines to the glory of French letters, says that "he merited his reputation by his invention, execution, and particularly by his style, which raised him

\* Ch. Potvin: Introduction to the poem of Perceval of Gallois.  
Gaston Paris: French Literature of the Middle Ages.

above all the poets of his time. Nevertheless, the great merit of Chrétien de Troies is rather in the form. "He took," says an author of the thirteenth century, "the beautiful French by handfuls, and left nothing after him but something to glean." He has created, in a certain way, the poetry of chivalry and the poetry of love.

Chrétien de Troies speaks better  
Of the wounded heart, the piercing eyes,  
Than one is able to say.

Thus says, half a century later, Huon de Méri: "Chrétien was, in all respects, a true poet and great writer. His works are easy to read, if one will only familiarize himself with the words and grammatical forms now become obsolete. It is an undertaking which requires neither much work nor great effort, thanks to the grammars and excellent glossaries of the language of the Middle Ages. One would, moreover, be well repaid for the trouble by the interest and charm which this old poem arouses."

The admission of Chrétien, that he received the idea of his poem of Perceval from "a book," proves that before his time there existed in England a history of this person, a story, a romance, or a poem, probably written in Latin. But it is his work which popularized this legend, and which, rapidly becoming celebrated, was immediately taken as a model, and inspired a considerable number of analogous tales. It found imitators



not only in France, but also in all other countries, in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, even in Norway and Portugal. One of the monuments of the old Portuguese tongue is a poem of Perceval, an imitation of the French. The chef-d'œuvre of the Germanic literature of the Middle Ages is the "Parzival" of Wolfram of Eschenbach, who expressly cites Chrétien de Troies among the authors who inspired him.

Thanks to this immense success, the poem of Chrétien was perpetuated in France in various ways. A first sequel seems to have been composed upon the notes left by the poet of Champagne. Two other continuations—one by the poet Menessier, who was in the service of Jeanne de Flandre, grandniece of Count Philippe, under whose auspices the first poem had been commenced; the other by Gerbert de Montreuil, to whom we owe a pretty story, the "Romance of the Violet"—tell of the adventures of Gauvain, the nephew of Arthur, the most celebrated of the Knights of the Round Table, who, in the romance of Chrétien, is frequently Perceval's companion in his adventures. The story, however, of Gauvain has but a slight connection with the Grail.

There are yet other great poems upon the Grail and Perceval. The poet of Franche-Comté, Robert de Boron, wrote one toward the beginning of the thirteenth century.\* Robert de Boron connected yet more di-

\* A German philologist, Mr. Birch-Hirschfeld, has expressed the opinion that the poem of Robert de Boron was anterior to that of

rectly than did Chrétien de Troies the legend of the sacred vase with the Breton cycle. For this purpose he wrote a kind of trilogy, entitled “Joseph of Arimathæa; or, the Little Holy Grail—Merlin—Perceval.” In this trilogy the Breton bard and enchanter, engendered by the devil to contend against Christ, but drawn to the good cause by his knowledge of the past and the future, forms a natural link between the history of the first miracles of the Holy Grail and the poem, which shows us this Grail finally obtained by Perceval and transported to heaven after his death. Unfortunately we possess of the work of Robert de Boron only the first poem \* and a fragment of the second; the third is lost, and there remain to us now only imitations in prose. The “Joseph of Arimathæa” narrates what the Grail really is, and announces that it will be carried to the Occident, and afterward discovered by a knight of the race of Joseph of Arimathæa. The “Perceval” narrates

Chrétien de Troies. Mr. Gaston Paris does not share this opinion, and for good reasons. Robert de Boron said himself that he had made a first draught of his poem “with Monseigneur Gautier, who was of Montbéliard.” That seems to indicate that the second composition, the only one which we have, has been written after the death of Gautier de Montbéliard—that is to say, after 1212. Therefore, Robert de Boron can hardly have written his first work before the composition of the Perceval of Chrétien de Troies, which cannot have been later than 1180.

\* The poem of Robert de Boron has been published, after the only manuscript known, by Mr. Francisque Michel, under the title, *Roman of the Holy Grail. Roman du Saint-Graal.* Bordeaux, 1841.

how this Knight found the Grail and put an end to the miracles of Bretagne. The "Merlin" serves as a transition between these two poems, he removing the scene to Bretagne, introducing Arthur, and recalling through Merlin the subject of the first poem and predicting that of the second.\*

It is through this "Merlin" that we learn what the Round Table was. In reality this institution is centred in the antique tradition of the assemblies of the chiefs of the Breton clans. These assemblies were held under the presiding of an elected supreme chief, called Guortiguern, or King ; they took place regularly during the principal festivals of the year, and exceptionally in all important circumstances. In these assemblies were discussed questions of legislation and the interests of the country. The Middle Ages made of them a sort of assemblage of the élite of the nation.

One day, when King Arthur held his court at Carlion, Merlin recalled to him the sacred supper and the episode of the treason of Judas.

After the death of Christ, Joseph of Arimathæa retired with his family and some disciples into the desert,

\* Merlin announces to the king *Uter*, that the vacant place at the Round Table will not be filled until the time of his successor, Arthur, and that by a man who is not yet born, and who will first accomplish the adventure of the Grail. It is Perceval to whom he refers. See the *Merlin* in prose, published by the Société des Anciens Textes français, and the *Littérature française au moyen âge*, par M. Gaston Paris.

where they suffered from hunger. Jesus then appeared to Joseph and ordered him to make a table after the pattern of that which had been used for the last supper, and to place upon this table the vessel, dish, or vase which he had preserved, the one out of which Jesus and the Apostles had eaten. When Joseph had fulfilled the orders of his Lord and all the persons of his suite were seated at table, *the table covered itself with food*. "Whoever was worthy to sit at this table had the satisfaction of his heart's desire," says the old chronicle. But at the table there was one vacant place. It was that which had been occupied by Judas at the sacred supper, the day when Jesus announced that he would be betrayed by one of his disciples. The mediæval writers, amplifying the recital of the Evangelists, add that Judas was driven from the table by Christ, and that Jesus even signified that the betrayer was "excluded from the companionship of God." In these words is centred the moral idea of the Round Table. Those who remained with Jesus were the pure, the true disciples, the knights of perfect loyalty, the faithful. From thence the indignity which strikes those who are excluded. When Joseph of Arimathæa made the second table, he had around him only the faithful, who all participated in the miraculous feast served by Christ in person; the unfaithful would not have been admitted to it. In the same way the Round Table admits only knights of perfect virtue. The Grail, which in-

cessantly repeated the miracle of the table of Joseph of Arimathæa in the desert, will not dispense its bounty to those who are not in every way worthy to look upon it.

This is in full the symbol of the Round Table. To be seated at the table of King Arthur was in some sort equivalent to a brevet of nobility, it was the official recognition of the valor, the courtesy, and the honor of a knight. Without searching very far, we may discover in our aristocratic modern clubs of England and France the survival of this knightly institution of the Middle Ages.

Only at this epoch the religious idea is added to the idea of chivalry. Chivalry was the union of the two things which occupied the Middle Ages, religion and war. Thus when, upon the advice of Merlin the wizard, Arthur founded the Round Table, he instituted it in the name of the Most Holy Trinity.\* From being military, as it seems to have been at the commencement, the Round Table became finally military and theocratic at the same time. To belong to the Round Table means to be a gallant knight and a good Christian.

The Round Table and the Grail were thenceforward indissolubly bound together. Until the fourteenth century no one spoke of the one without alluding to the other. The primitive fictions of the legend, being a poetic interpretation and the generalization of actual

\* See the Merlin in prose published by the Société des Anciens Textes.

facts and of historical events, were altered more and more by the addition of elements borrowed from the gospel and the religious mysteries of the newly implanted religion. The absorption by the Church of all the national traditions was complete.

Not less curious is the transformation of the same myths in passing from one people to another. They are filled with numerous allusions to the local traditions, to the particular customs, and to the ancient religious beliefs of their new centres ; the idea is like a river, the current of which is swelled by the tributary waters of the countries through which it flows. Germany borrowed from France, just as France had borrowed from England, which itself owes much to the Scandinavians. These exchanges are, however, reciprocal. “*La Chanson de Roland*,” which is pre-eminently the most famous French epic, has sprung from traditions essentially Germanic. The two most beautiful poetic monuments of the Middle Ages, the “*Nibelungen*” and the “*Parzival*,” are the one of Scandinavian origin, the other Celtic and French.

Dante, Ariosto, even Tasso, cannot be understood if we do not take into account the influences of the North upon the imagination of the South. It is a profound error, unfortunately taught for too long a time, that everything comes to us from the Greeks and Romans. The great migrations of peoples during the fifth century have produced throughout Europe, from the North to



the South, a prodigious clashing of ideas, of remembrances, and of customs peculiar to each of the races which have participated in this extraordinary movement. The result of it was a sort of free exchange of thoughts and the formation of a common poetical fund, from which all the nations successively borrowed.\*

The same poetic basis thus gives rise to productions very different in character and spirit, according to the moment of their unfolding, and the nationality of the authors of their successive adaptations. There is in this an intellectual and artistic movement very nice to study, in which are always clearly marked the peculiar characteristics which the different literatures of Central Europe will have in their period of full blossoming. It is sufficient here to indicate in a summary manner these beginnings.

We shall draw the conclusion from this, that the poetic protection and the ostracism pronounced by one people in regard to the artistic productions of another, constitute the most saddening and inexplicable phenomenon.

\* See upon this subject the excellent introduction to the *Chanson de Roland*, by M. Alphonse d'Avril, who has made a complete résumé upon all the previous works on this interesting subject, and who states fully the essential facts. *La Chanson de Roland*, from the old French, by Adolf d'Avril. Paris : J. Albanal. 1867.

## HISTORY AND POETRY.

THE characteristic feature common to the majority of the chivalric poems of the Middle Ages is the introduction of simple-minded, unsophisticated, or ignorant persons. They are shown to us as in conflict with all the difficulties of life and with the subtleties of nature, which they either overcome or circumvent by the firmness of their volition, by perseverance, by courage, or by their abnegation of self in all circumstances.

There is a profound and eminently poetic significance in this spectacle of man deprived of all support, born beyond the pale of society, reared without the ordinary rules of life, struggling with energy and unfalteringly against all the obstacles that confront him, and gaining ultimately the ascendancy over his contemporaries by the power acquired in the ordeals he has undergone. In describing the unruly impulses of a soul struggling beneath the action of mere natural inspiration, of remorse for a wrong committed, or of physical or moral suffering, they relate the eternal history of the human family. The fundamental idea is always that of an invincible fatality ; the oracle predicts, man would fain ward off the menace, but everything goes to prove how

blind the spirit of feeble mortals is, and by what means inexorable fate knows how to recapture its prey. Such histories are as touching as the reminiscences of early youth; they exhale a vernal fragrance; they conjure up in each of us images of our own past; and though they may leave behind them a feeling akin to regret at the loss of this past, they add thereto all the plenitude of feelings, all the grandeur of the facts which separate the short and humble history of the individual from the infinite and glorious history of humanity.

This grandeur and this depth of feeling attracted and enthralled Wagner from the moment when, abandoning the historic drama after "*Rienzi*," he entered the domain of the legendary drama in the "*Flying Dutchman*."

"*Tannhäuser*," "*Lohengrin*," "*Tristan and Isolde*," the "*Ring of the Nibelungen*," finally "*Parsifal*," all these subjects, which are outside of history, captivated him by their profoundly human character, and herein his intuition as philosopher and great poet aided the musician wonderfully well.

Poetry and music are really a simplification—a sublimification, to use a bold expression of Liszt. They are forced to generalize, if they would be elevated. On the other hand, they tend downward as soon as they seek to specialize. In all times, the greatest poets have been those who have expressed the simplest thoughts and the most general truths. Because the human being

has but one way of feeling or thinking, despite all the variations which the circumstances of time and place, the difference of race and temperaments, and society itself lend to the expression of feeling and thought, the essence of both remains universally the same. After the lapse of a certain time, what does the manner signify in which crises of the heart or of the mind were manifested in the individual, if we do not recognize in them the general laws which govern the development of human passions? Ultimately the details are always obliterated and merged into the *ensemble*.

It is this which renders history, generally speaking, unsuitable for poetry. It studies the evolutions and revolutions of politics only from the standpoint of the larger or smaller part, which the caprice or the errors of certain persons have taken therein; that is to say, that it especially takes notice of accidents too personal to reveal to us general laws. The real life of the peoples, that is, of humanity, it scarcely suspects; whatever is obscure, continuous, or ethical, in the anonymous action of the masses, fatally eludes the calculations and perspicacity of the historian, too preoccupied with material facts and the accuracy of documents. When history would understand and collect the evidences of these unexpressed influences, it should apply to poetry; for by poetry alone can it explain all that which the aspiration of the races, an imponderable element, adds in force to the ideas, gives in power and boldness to

individuals, and in impatience or weakness to the governments.

Poetry, then, is of more constant and loftier interest than history, because it is the purest, the most complete expression of the life of a people. It is not necessary to extricate its teachings from the facts which hide or disguise them; they are clear, definite, and universal. Accordingly the legends, the poetized history, have always been more favorable to the dramatic poem than the dry and flavorless realities of history. Count, if you will, the historic tragedies which the theatre has seen since the days of antiquity, and place against them the dramas based on the legend either purely fictitious or inspired by historic traditions; I do not believe that you will long hesitate in forming a conclusion. For ten masterpieces born of legends, from "Erinnys," "King Œdipus," and "Iphigenia," to "Faust," noting also "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "King Lear," "The Cid," how many historic dramas really have taken possession of the memory of men? Fiction and reality are more intimately connected than is generally admitted by the modern critic; as Victor Hugo has said, "They sometimes astonish our minds by the singular parallelisms which we discover in them."

I do not dwell upon this subject in order to justify Richard Wagner for having preferred the legendary drama to the historic drama: his works are with us, and

they suffice for the defence of his favorite argument upon the essence of the lyric stage. I simply desired to meet one of the most stubborn current prejudices existing despite the evidence of proofs that should destroy it, namely, that the theatre exists only by depicting real life. The theatre, like all forms of art, exists, above all, by poetry, that is, by abstraction and essence. Material truth in the action is of no more consequence in the spoken than in the sung or lyric drama. But it is of importance that the personages should embody the truth of human sentiment, that is to say, in the logic of their character, their condition, and their moral being. To this the legend has never been an obstacle, quite the contrary ; for one may affirm of every legend that its truth is beyond the reach of contest when once success has sanctioned it. Legendary fiction is simply a more or less ingenious means of throwing into a high and vivid relief the existence of men and of things in their absolute and superior truth, disencumbering them from contingencies which weaken their vital intensity. It is necessarily factitious, since it is not natural ; it would be no longer worthy of art, if it encroached upon the truth of human realities ; but from the very moment that it does not alter this truth, it is in its proper place on the stage, in the dramatic poem, as in every other form of art, because, independently of the interest it can offer to the mind by its ingeniousness, it furnishes to the poet, the revealer of souls, inestimable resources in its



adaptability and variety ; it places the personages and the subject of the action at once above ordinary reality in the superior and truer reality of the artistic life, in other words, of life conceived in its ideal totality and plenitude.

Besides, whatever the present school of critics may think of it, legends are by no means productions of a simple and naïve art, stories appealing to minds little cultivated. Quite the reverse. They are very subtle and infinitely suggestive works, philosophically more accurate than history, for example, or the philosophical novel drawn from real life ; because they move above the contingencies and accidents of brutal reality in the world of appearances, in the sphere of souls where alone human truth exists.

Well understood, it is with the legend as with every poem, every book, and every work of art ; it is necessary to know how to separate whatever that is narrow or personal which the poets, those artisans of the diffused thought of a race or of an epoch, have brought into it. It remains to each one's sagacity to make allowance for the individual in these general creations, and to make profound researches for whatever of liberty and of truth resides in the symbols and abstractions of popular poetry. But how many are there, who, having spoken of these ancient traditions and appreciating them, have taken the trouble to read these delicate poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from beginning to end ?

It would not require a long time to number them. The ignorance of the majority of French writers about the real poetic origin of their literature is so extraordinary, that quite recently, in a great literary and somewhat academic journal, there appeared a long essay in which a professor who had gone through the Normal School did not hesitate to declare openly his astonishment upon discovering that Victor Hugo, in his "Legend of the Centuries," was directly inspired by the old poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And this declaration was regarded as a precious discovery.

On the other hand, this ignorance can be explained. Only a very few rare republications of our old authors are now extant, which, printed in a very small number, have naturally not been spread far. Occasionally, copies are found at the sales of books of famous bibliophiles; these copies are not even cut; they have never been read. Do you wonder, after this, that upon the appearance of Wagner's dramas the critic was found so inadequate and so incompetent?

When "Parsifal" was first spoken of, a few reopened their history of literature and discovered in it, some to their surprise, the name of Chrétien de Troies and the mention of his "Perceval." So it was a French subject; what a triumph! And they were content to reproduce the thirty or forty lines assigned to this sweet and graceful poem by the literary tribunal of the Middle Ages. It has occurred to no one, thus far, to read and

analyze it. There is, however, a real advantage in comparing among themselves the successive adaptations of this subject-matter, and to seize alive, if I may say so, in full elaboration, the transformation which the primitive myth has undergone in the imagination of the modern poet. This comparison offers more than a literary interest, for we derive from it great æsthetic instruction.

## PERCEVAL.

I HAVE previously explained how the early Breton traditions, of which Chrétien de Troies borrowed the tale of Perceval's adventures, became imbued by degrees with Christian ideas. The poet of the Champagne, while sacrificing much to these ideas, still remained true to the profound philosophy of the primitive myth, whereby man in his nakedness—if I may be allowed the expression—was introduced as in conflict with all the obstacles and hardships of life. Throughout the poem Perceval's moral character is delineated unfalteringly by a hand at once firm and unerring. At the very beginning of his poem, Chrétien declares its entire philosophy :

Who little sows will little gather,  
And where one fain would reap,  
In that place let him scatter grain,  
Whence he may have a hundredfold ;  
For in unfruitful soil  
The good seed cannot thrive.

And after having informed us that the story he is about to relate is the story of the Grail, than which

none better has ever been told at the royal court, he enters immediately upon his subject : 16391

What time the trees begin to bud,  
 The groves to tire themselves in green,  
 And in the latin of their tribe  
 The birds sing sweetly to the morn ;  
 While all things are aflame with joy,  
 The widow's son in forest drear  
 Arises. . . .

The widow's son is Perceval, the Welshman. In the manuscript of the poem preserved in the Montpellier library, the tale begins thus without any introductory explanation. There is, however, another manuscript extant at Mons, of which Mr. Charles Potvin has published a complete edition ; it contains a preliminary chapter of about twelve hundred verses, which is lacking in all other known manuscripts, but which is of great importance. It explains to us how Perceval's father having been killed in a public tournament, his mother, Kamuellès, seeks refuge in a forest, there to bring up her only son. The author also tells us what the Grail is, and how the Knights of the Round Table have imposed upon themselves the duty of defending everywhere the honor of the "damoiselles." He describes the misery in which the country is involved because of the incessant wars and the misdeeds of the wicked monarchs of the country of Logres, that is, of England :

The kingdoms to ruin reverted,  
The earth seemed dead and deserted,  
So that it was worth but two nuts.

In this preface there are also maidens mentioned who guard the wells, an evident allusion to the Breton fairies, and also, in all probability, to the basin (or well) of Ceridwen, the Breton Ceres, the tutelary goddess of plenty, who nourished the human family. In consequence of the invasions of King Awangons, the maidens, that is, the fairies, left the country, and instead of seeing them, as formerly, issuing from the wells with a vessel of gold in their hands, with

Rashers, patties, and bread,  
Linen bleached, and dish  
Of gold and silver,

to refresh the passer-by, there reigned everywhere misery and desolation. Then the knights of the good King Artus having heard "these stories related,"

All vowed to guard  
The maids with might,  
To slay those who  
Did them despite.

These few preliminary hints are well to keep in mind, for they indicate from the very beginning the part assigned to Perceval by Chrétien de Troies: he is a reformer; he is to re-establish order and prosperity in the land, with the aid of the knights of the Round



Table, thanks above all to the power which the Holy Grail will give to them, and the spear with which

Longis struck the side  
Of the king of Sacred Majesty.

This introductory chapter of the Mons manuscript tells us another very important and characteristic circumstance. When Kamuellès, Perceval's mother, learns of her husband's death,

Oft she swooned, and lamenting sore,  
She cried, "Alas, most hapless one,  
Why do I live? I've lost my lord  
Who ever did me honor great."  
Then would she weep anew, with outcry loud,  
And curse the hour when she was born,  
Conceived, and rear'd  
To suffer mortal woe.  
So might you hear her cry and sob  
That not a man, how hard so'er his heart,  
But seeing her, would pity.

Thus for seven months she dwells in her castle, having no other care than her son.

Ofttimes she pondered how to keep him close,  
That he might never grow to be a knight,  
Know how to carry arms, or hear of knights.  
She studied how to grant his every wish.  
If he indeed should die by knightly arms,  
As both his uncle and his sire befell,  
She too, his mother, in her grief for him  
Would die, nor live another day.

What does she do next? She summons her vassals, takes leave of them under pretence of going to Scotland, and orders them to guard her estate carefully until her return, then, instead of going to Scotland, she seeks refuge in a lonely forest, that she may rear her son far from all, from noise and the world, but especially—and this is a charming and delicate touch—far from all chivalry.

The romance proper begins when Perceval has reached his fourteenth year. Often he has ridden through the forest, hunting the deer or pursuing the birds with his “gaverlos” or arrows; every time when he returns, his anxious mother covers him with kisses and urges him to flee, should he ever encounter

. . . folk clad  
As though they were covered with iron,

that is to say, knights. “They are devils,” she tells him. “Be on your guard against them and do not stop, but say your Credo and come back forthwith.” The maternal counsels, however, go for naught.

One day—“what time the trees begin to bud”—Perceval wanders farther into the forest than has been his wont, delighted by

The sweetness of the balmy day  
And by the songster’s joyous lay,

when he sees five knights approaching, clad in armor,

who "*menait grande noise*," i.e., made a great noise in the forest.

His first impulse is not to cross himself, as his mother bade him do; good blood cannot lie, and Perceval was not born to fly danger. He wants to go straightway to these devils and chase them away; so he awaits them with uplifted spear; but when they come quite near him,

And he sees their quivering targes,  
And their bright and lustrous hauberts,  
And their lances, and their bucklers,  
Such he never yet had looked on;  
When he sees the vert and vermeil  
Gleaming brightly in the sunlight,  
Sees the gold and sees the silver,  
Then he cries, "Ha, Lord, I thank thee,  
These are angels whom I see."

And the hero who does not flee, the hero who fears not the devils, throws himself on his knees and prostrates himself before these unknown beings.

"Child," says the leader of the band, "fear not."

"By the Saviour of the world, I fear not," replied the youth. "Are you not God?"

"Nay, by my troth!"

"What are you, then?"

"I am a knight."

A knight! The dreaded word is uttered, the word

which foreshadows the destiny of the hero. In vain does the leader ask for tidings of five knights and three maidens wandering over the heath, whom Perceval may have met. Perceval hears nothing ; he sees lances, shields, and coats of mail, and he is absorbed by the one desire to learn of these things which impress him now for the first time. He is questioned, but he hears not the question ; to the contrary, he questions the knights, asking who they are, what their work is, and what the names of their arms. Their leader at length exclaims :

“ I thought, fair gentle friend,  
Some news to learn from thee,  
But thou wouldst learn from me.”

Being unable to draw a single word from Perceval, the knights leave him and exchange views among themselves upon this “ simpleton,” who knows nothing of chivalry, and does not even make a straightforward reply to any question, but

Asks the name and use of all he sees.

Chrétien uses some charming touches to paint the hero's naïve astonishment. Perceval asks the knights if they were born thus clad in mail. This foolish question leads the knight to explain that his arms and his rank have been given him by good King Artus. Thus Perceval learns, at one time, all that was to be kept





secret from him, and when he returns to his mother, although, according to our poet,

The Welsh are all by nature  
More dull than brutes in pasture,

he rehearses in his own mind all that he has seen and heard.

And then begins a scene of most touching delicacy between the child and the mother, whose heart was sad and mournful because of his prolonged absence. The poet shows her to us, as she runs to meet him :

For as a mother who does love him much,  
She runs to him and calls, "Fair son,  
Fair son !" more than a hundred times.

Perceval's first act is to relate to his mother all the marvels he has just seen in the forest.

"Is it not your wont to say, my mother,  
That the angels of the Lord, our God,  
So surpassing fair are, that in nature  
Ne'er was seen a more entrancing creature?"

The mother foresees some misfortune ; she would fain divert his thoughts, so she takes him in her arms and says :

"My son, commend thyself to God,  
Great danger threatens thee,  
For thou hast seen, methinks,  
Those spirits who affright mankind  
And slay those whom they meet."



“Nay, mother, nay, it is not so,  
They’re knights, thus are they called.”

Knights, always knights ! The mother grows faint  
at the word :

“Alas, unhappy that I am,  
My dear, sweet son, who would have guarded thee  
Safe from the ills of chivalry,  
That you might never see a knight,  
Nor be one in your own despite.”

The calamity she dreaded has come to pass. She  
mourns in vain and betrays herself in her very lamenta-  
tions, in which the pride of her race manifests itself.  
“For I am born of knightly blood, and that the best in  
the land.” Then, sadly, she tells him of the death of  
his father, of his uncle, and of all his relatives who  
have perished in tournaments and murderous combats.  
Perceval scarcely hears her ; he wants to be a knight ;  
that is his destiny, and no one shall prevent him :

“Give me food, thou canst not hold me.  
To that king I’ll go right boldly  
Who makes the knights. His royal side  
I’ll reach, let whatsoe’er betide.”

The poor mother does not even try to oppose him ;  
she knows it would be useless.

Three days later she lets him go in quest of King  
Artus :

“My sorrow is exceeding great,  
Fair son, when I behold thee going,”

she says, and then she gives him tender advice :

“Shouldst thou find, near or far,  
A dame who wants thine aid ;  
Or shouldst thou meet a maiden,  
Who, abandoned, seeks thy care,  
Then grant it, when they ask thee.  
Great honor will be due thee.  
Who honors not a maid,  
His honor shall be dead.  
For to serve dames and maidens now  
Is counted worthy everywhere.  
Should one crave aught from thee, my son,  
Take heed thou dost no harm to her.”

This is the complete code of knightly courtesy, to which the poor mother adds yet other rules of good conduct :

“Fair son, moreover, I would say,  
Ne'er a-field nor housed hold intercourse  
Long time with one, unless you know his name ;  
Know name and station, too,  
For by the name you know the man.”

She advises him to consort only with *preudommes*, or men of wisdom :

“Fair son, talk thou with wise men,  
And go with wise men eke,  
For wisdom never counsels ill  
Those who her friendship seek.”

She also counsels him to attend mass devoutly and to pray to our Lord ; then she supplies him with all that is necessary, and tenderly embraces him :

The mother kissed him whom she held so dear,  
While from her eyelids welled forth many a tear  
As she beheld him going. Then she prayed  
That God might lead him and vouchsafe his aid  
In time of trouble. "Sweet son," thus cried she,  
"God give thee greater joy than hath to me  
Been given."

And Perceval sets forth. When he has gone "a little stone's throw," that is, as far as a small stone can be thrown, he turns about and sees from afar his mother lying at the end of the bridge, as though she were dead. He does not stop, however ; destiny forces him onward, and, whipping his horse, he is carried away "at a great pace."

Then his days of errantry begin, which do not end until he has conquered the kingdom of the Grail. His early adventures suffice to portray the innocence of his soul. He is an uncivilized youth, unconscious of the good or of the evil that he does ; the guileless one who blindly follows his natural impulses ; a dolt or simpleton, as Chrétien de Troies calls him. He follows his mother's counsels to the very letter, but he applies them the wrong way. Thus, in the course of his first journey, he sees a tent pitched.

In a fair meadow, near a fountain head, .  
A damsel lay in slumber on her bed.  
Alone was she, without a friend ; her maids  
Were gone to cull fresh flowers in the glades.

He is enraptured at the sight of this damsel, and  
without flinching he enters the tent. But

Loud neighed his horse ; the sound aroused the maid,  
Who woke sore trembling and afraid.  
“ Fair damsel, I will kiss thee,” quoth the lad  
Of simple mind, “ for thus my mother bade  
Me greet all maidens whom I met.”  
Whereat the damsel grew more timid yet,  
Believing him half-crazed. “ Begone,” cried she,  
“ Fly, ere my friend, returning, seeth thee.”

Perceval, who fears nothing, insists :

“ Nay, by my head, I’ll have a kiss,” quoth he,  
“ Since thus my mother hath instructed me.”

The maiden defends herself, but Perceval is the  
stronger of the two :

And then he kissed her, in his foolish way,  
Knowing none other ; and the stories say  
A score of times, tho’ sore against her will  
He kissed, and kissed, and kissed her still.

Then he perceives at her finger a ring ornamented  
with a very bright emerald ; the ring pleases him and  
he longs to possess it.

Again he said, “ My mother bade me get  
The golden circlet on thy finger set ;

But more than this, none other thing  
Am I to take from thee, save that same ring."

All his mother's counsels are carried out in like manner. After taking the lady's ring, he eats a pastry, which he finds in the tent ; then, greatly refreshed, he takes leave of the lady :

" God save thee, friend," quoth he once more ;  
" Why, in His name, dost grieve so sore  
After thy ring, which I have ta'en away ?  
For surely as must come my dying day,  
Will I make good its loss to thee.  
I'll leave now as thou biddest me."

He then withdraws without troubling himself further as to the damsel's fate, and without even suspecting the import of his deeds. In a word, one cannot imagine anything less chivalrous than these first exploits of our hero. Thus, when he first arrives at King Artus's court, where he enters on horseback, he makes but a poor appearance. The ladies, it is true, detect a noble presence in this savage knave, but the knights take him to be a fool.

Finding Artus pensive and silent, he turns his horse so abruptly that he knocks the king's hat off.

In mockery, a seneschal offers him the arms of a knight who has done the king an injury by carrying off his gold cup. Perceval, all unwitting of chivalry and of the usages of knightly combats, does not hesitate, goes to the battle-field, provokes an encounter with

the knight, and slays him with a single blow of his lance. This is his first exploit. He then takes possession of the knight's arms, and sends the gold cup back to King Artus. This prowess naturally produces a profound impression. The king's jester leaps and stamps with joy. He tells Artus that in future he will see many violent and rough adventures take place. Our poet knows how to augment skilfully the interest attaching to his hero by permitting us to catch a glimpse of the lofty destiny Perceval is called to fulfil. Already Artus regrets that he has not detained this *savage knave*, and he reproves his seneschal Kex\* for having allowed him to depart without being knighted.

“ Ah, Kex, right sorely hast thou vexed me to-day  
 In that thou bad'st the youth get arms  
 Ere he knew how to wield them.  
 And doubtless with his shield and lance  
 He would have been an able knight.  
 Yet doth he know so little now  
 Of weapons or aught else besides,  
 Not even could he draw his sword,  
 Were he in combat with a knight—  
 When armed and mounted on his steed,  
 Were he to meet some squire who strives  
 To win his arms, straight would the lad

\* Chrétien de Troies makes of Kex a proper noun. This word is a common noun of the language of the twelfth century, which we find spelled *keis*, *kex*, *keux*, and which means cook, from the Latin word *cocus*. From this is derived the modern word *maître queux*—head cook.

Attack him, and attacked in turn,  
Be slain, for Perceval knows not  
How to defend himself ; so dull  
And stupid is the youth."

In the meantime, Perceval has pursued his journey, clad in the armor of the red knight he has just slain. We soon find him learning the profession of arms under the tuition of a good *wise-man* whose castle he has come across in his travels. It is a charming and characteristic trait that Perceval remembers constantly his mother and her counsels. Meeting this *wise-man* upon the bridge, Perceval greets him courteously.

His mother's words the lad remembered,  
And bowing to this good man, said,  
"Thus, Master, have I from my mother learned."  
"God bless thee, brother," the good man returned,  
Who knew him by his speech to be a fool.

The old man gives him good advice in other things :

The good man spake : "Fair friend," quoth he,  
"What one knows not, may well acquired be  
By him who, counting not the cost, takes heed.  
In any trade, if one would fain succeed,  
Let him be busy, brave, and careful ; so  
With these three virtues, all things may he know."

This *wise-man* who welcomes the *simpleton* so cordially is called Gonemans de Gelbort by Chrétien de



Troies. One day, when they are walking together, Perceval questions him about it.

Now, as the two walked side by side,  
Unto his host the stripling cried :  
“My mother, Master, bade me not remain  
Long time with any man, before his name  
I knew ; now tell me thine, therefore.”  
“Fair friend, Gonemans de Gelbort,  
Thus am I called,” replied the worthy man.

This character is the prototype of the good knight Gurnemanz in Wagner's “Parsifal.” There is an extremely subtle charm throughout this part of Chrétien de Troies' poem. He shows us how, little by little, the hero's mind awakens. The good Gonemans de Gelbort invites him to remain a whole year with him, if he please, in the company of his own children ; but Perceval already begins to experience feelings which heretofore were unknown to him. He cannot stay ; he now recalls his abrupt departure from the maternal roof, and the sorrow, uncomprehended at that time, which his mother felt as she saw him pass out of sight. He would like to see her again :

“Sire, I know not if I be anear  
The house where dwells my mother dear,  
But I pray God, who leadeth me,  
That I may go once more to see  
Her whom last upon the ground  
I saw sink in a deadly swoond,

Close to the bridge, before her door.  
Mayhap, indeed, from sorrow sore,  
Because of me, she may have died,  
Sith that she swooned when I left her side.  
I am her son, and hence I may not stay  
Long time from her. I go by break of day."

And on the morrow, Perceval really takes leave of the good *wise-man*, who girds his sword about him, embraces him with fatherly tenderness, and, as a last counsel, bids him never abuse his advantage in knightly combats.

Thus the moral of the romance is drawn more and more clearly, showing us how religion, education, and the experiences of life transform a rude and brutal character, correct the nature, and refine the sentiments.

But we will not follow Perceval throughout all the adventures in which the legend and the poet's fancy make him play a part.

For a long time he wanders from castle to castle, accomplishing all sorts of exploits, setting all snares at naught, fighting with the king of the *Deadly Castle* whence *good credence* (the Christian faith) had been taken away, and consoling the fair Blanche fleur, Gonerion's niece, who relates to him all her woes, and bids him go to deliver the knights and ladies imprisoned in Gringaron. Wherever he is told to go, thither he hurries with lightsome heart; he rides, he fights, he encounters men and women from whom he learns to know sufferings or joys, and imperceptibly there is born

within him the emotion of pity. The image of his mother, sunk down in a swoon at the end of the bridge before her door, does not leave him. The poet even shows him to us one morning praying ardently :

Asking God, our Lord, of Sovereign Majesty,  
That once again his mother he might see,  
In health and perfect happiness.

As he prays thus on the bank of a river, he sees approaching in a bark the *King Pêcheur*, a very enigmatical character, as portrayed by Chrétien de Troies, but whose type is much more clearly drawn by Wolfram von Eschenbach. Chrétien tells us that this king *lies in anguish*, but he commits a singular error. He regards the epithet *pêcheur* as an allusion to fishing. Evidently he was not familiar with the legend connected with the king's illness.

'Twas in a combat, he was stricken sore  
In such wise, he could help himself no more.  
For from a spear thrust his two thighs between  
He even yet endured cruel pain,  
And ne'er again might he bestride his steed.  
But from thenceforth, whenever he had need  
Of any pleasure, or disport would make,  
Straightway they launched a boat upon the lake,  
That there he might spear fishes, whence his name  
Of *Fishing King*, as he is known to fame.

In Wolfram's German poem, Amfortas is called "*King Pêcheur*" and *lies in anguish*, because he has sinned (péché). The type of this sick and feeble king is found

even in the old Celtic tales, where he suffers cruelly, because, on account of his feebleness, he cannot avenge his father's death. In the tales of the Grail the moral idea introduced into the primitive legend makes the king appear as having committed the sin of sensuality. Later he is represented as having transgressed the vow of chastity, which binds the knights of the Grail, and hence his illness is a punishment from heaven.

Chrétien de Troies presents this whole episode obscurely enough. The only part which interests us, from the stand-point where we place ourselves in this work, is, that here, at the court of the sick king, Perceval sees, for the first time, the Grail and the spear which bleeds. While seated at the bedside of the *King Pêcheur*, he sees a page enter, carrying a lance :

Lo, from the spear-point, see a drop  
Of blood, which, from the iron top  
Down to the stripling's hand, its way  
Encrimsoned rolled.

Then come two pages carrying candlesticks of fine enamelled gold, in which burn ten candles at the very least ; after the two pages, a damsel enters, holding *a grail* between her two hands :

When she had entered, from the Grail there came,  
Which she bore in her hands, a flame  
So wonderously clear and bright,  
The very candles dimmed their light,  
As do the stars, when sun or moon arise.

The maiden who carries the grail is followed by another who bears a silver dish.

It is obvious that Chrétien does not understand the grail to be a dish. While the author does not describe it exactly, still it is probable that the object he calls "a grail" was really a chalice.

The procession, of which we have just spoken, makes a tour of the hall, and passes by the king's couch ; then the servants spread the tables, which abound in delicious meats. All present participate in this *pleasant and delectable* feast. Chrétien does not state clearly whether Perceval shares the banquet, but it is probable that he only looked on, for the poet tells us three times, with a remarkable insistence, that Perceval forgets to ask the meaning of the Grail and its use. We must believe that at the period when Chrétien wrote, everybody knew the import of this question which Perceval did not ask. In all likelihood, the mystery of the Grail was only revealed to him who informed himself of the significance of this symbol. It was necessary to undergo a sort of initiation. When Perceval was allowed to see for the first time this marvellous cup, he was as yet uninitiated, just as previously he was too ignorant to be knighted by the noble king Artus. Chrétien explains, moreover, that the inexperienced youth refrains from asking this indispensable question because, once more, he follows literally the counsels of the *wise-man* Gonemans, who had told him not to speak too much, and not to ask too many questions.

However, Perceval has the desire to ask this question, but he postpones it until the morrow. Now when he awakes on the next morning he finds himself alone in the castle, absolutely deserted. His horse, already saddled, is before the door, his lance and his shield are leaning against the wall, and the drawbridge is lowered. He departs ; but at the very moment when he crosses the bridge it rises, and Perceval's horse is obliged to make a mighty leap. Perceval turns around, calls to those who have drawn up the bridge, and wants to know, at last, what the Grail is, and why the lance bleeds ; but no one replies, it is too late.

Only after having wandered a long time in the woods, he learns that he has committed a grave error by not asking the question regarding the mystery. A maiden, upon whose lap a dead knight is lying, reveals this to him. At the same time she tells him that his mother is dead. Greatly distressed, Perceval cannot believe the tidings, but the young woman confirms them. She has recognized him instantly, for she is his own cousin, who in early years was brought up with him, and it was she herself who laid his mother in the tomb.

“ She has died of grief for thee.”

Ah ! cries Percival, you tell me a false story.

“ Sith ye have buried her, what's left for me  
To seek ? My mother once again to see  
Was all I hoped for in my wanderings.”

Nevertheless, he continues his journey toward his mother's abode, and passes again by the tent where he had his first adventure. There he again sees the young woman whom he kissed, and who is cruelly abused on his account by her jealous husband, the *Haughty Knight of the Plain*. It goes without saying that there is soon a meeting between this husband and Perceval.

The interview is exciting. The *Haughty Knight of the Plain* does not know as yet that Perceval is the young Welshman of whom he has cause to complain, and he tells him his whole grievance. He will not believe in his lady's innocence.

Perceval, with the utmost simplicity, acknowledges everything :

“ Good friend, thou may'st assured be  
Of her repentance. I am he  
Who kissed her 'gainst her will, her ring  
I took ; but did no other thing.”

One can readily imagine the effect of this innocent avowal. The husband throws himself upon Perceval and a furious combat ensues. Perceval apparently has the advantage ; then the poor lady, who views the struggle from afar, manifests such excessive fear and sincere sorrow, upon beholding her husband in danger, that Perceval is greatly troubled. He takes pity upon her

“ Who weeps so for a friend  
That caused her such shame,”



and shows mercy to the *Haughty Knight of the Plain*, on the one condition, however, that he will first show mercy to his lady :

“ She merits not, in sooth I swear,  
The evils thou hast made her bear.”

Compare these two meetings of Perceval with the lady of the tent, and you will grasp at once the moral progress which has been wrought in him.

With a most ingenious delicacy, Chrétien knows how to vary the nature of Perceval's adventures, so that each time a new phase of the hero's character is revealed. His thoughtless insensibility is now to be entirely changed : Perceval will fall in love, and in an extremely refined and poetic manner Chrétien de Troies shows us how the *charm of love* is born within him.

One cold morning Perceval is walking alone in a meadow, near a wood. The ground is white, as it has been snowing during the night, for *cold was the country*, when suddenly he sees a flock of crows pursued by a falcon. One of the crows is wounded and three drops of blood fall upon the pure snow. But listen to our poet :

When Perceval saw on the snow  
The ruddy drops shed by the crow,  
Then straight he leaned upon his spear,  
And fell a-musing on his dear,  
Upon whose cheek the color bright  
Did mantle o'er a skin so white,

That like the blood-stained snow it seemed.  
Thus ever as he gazed, he dreamed  
Of that fresh bloom on his friend's face.

Perceval passes thus the entire morning, dreaming of his friend, until some squires of King Artus meet him, and conduct him to the camp of the king, who, on his way to the castle Karlion, was resting near by.

Squires who saw him musing  
Thought that he was sleeping.

Sleeping, no ! Perceval dreams. That he whom, heretofore, we have seen riding over mountain and valley, without object or purpose, without desire even, except the desire to become a brave and noble knight, is dreaming now ; or, more strictly speaking, he is musing, as Chrétien tells us, since the word dream, in its modern signification, did not exist in the language of the twelfth century. Perceval has been completely transformed. The charm of love is at work ; the charm of love, delicious phrase, which in its primitive meaning expresses that sort of hallucination, that bewitching of the mind, that unique state of the soul, which is as yet not passion, that violent and irresistible affinity of two beings for each other, but something purer, sweeter, more ethereal and ideal ; that unconscious attraction between two hearts as yet ignorant of each other's existence, who, nevertheless, with dim

prevision, anticipate the being whom they will soon claim more ardently.

Yes, Perceval is in love ; his heart is vaguely moved ; he dreams. Of whom ? Chrétien does not tell us at once, but he adds a delicate touch to the picture in the words "*his fair friend.*" Perceval probably does not know himself who she is. Evidently, however, she is one of the maidens whom he has met at Artus's court, perhaps the beautiful Blanchefleur. Intentionally, Chrétien leaves us in doubt concerning the being whose features pass before Perceval's mental vision ; he only tells us that her skin is as white as the snow, and her lips as red as the bird's blood. A modern writer of fiction would not have failed to analyze in detail all the sensations experienced by the hero during his reverie, but it sufficed for Chrétien's purpose to indicate briefly, but with fine precision and truthfulness, the indefinite emotion to which Perceval thus suddenly fell a prey. And what a lovely picture we have here ! How original, yet how accurate ! The knight, all encased in iron, leaning on his spear, gazes at the ruddy drops on the snow.

And now a new life begins for him. The savage knave, the simpleton of the first portion of the poem changes from thenceforth. He becomes tender and affectionate. He is no longer so childishly naïve that he is regarded as a fool ; he no longer demands to embrace ladies, as before ; he becomes tractable, and

has grown to be a man who will soon become a Christian.

Hardly has he arrived at the court of King Artus, at Karlion, when a sorceress, the "*Demoiselle Hydeuse*," as she is called in a prose edition of our romance, informs him of the error of which he has been guilty in not asking about the Holy Grail and the bleeding lance. The intervention of the *Demoiselle Hydeuse* is entirely characteristic. Chrétien describes her minutely. She comes to the court riding on a tawny mule, holding a whip in her hand. Her face and body are entirely black, she looks like a mad woman, and so ugly, says the poet,

Of naught more ugly may we tell  
An' were it even born in hell.

. . . . .  
Her eyes were small as any rat's,  
Her nose like to an ape's or cat's,  
Her lips most like a bull's I ween,  
Or like an ass's ; teeth between  
Like yolks of eggs, such is their hue.  
She's bearded goat-wise ; 'tis most true.

She is also hump-backed and deformed. This is the perfect type of the mediæval sorceress, the magician who plays so important a part in all the tales of Celtic origin, and who remains, even in our own days, one of the creations of the popular imagination. Without glancing at Perceval and addressing the king, she cries: "Ha, Perceval, fortune is bald, she only has

hair in front and on the back of her head. Luckless wight, who did not know how to detain her when you met her! You went to the palace of the *King Pécheur* and you saw the lance. Was it such trouble to open your mouth to speak and ask why the drop of blood oozed from the iron point? You saw the Holy Grail, and you did not inquire about its use! Had you spoken then, know that King Pécheur, who is suffering so much, would have been cured of his wounds; that his lands, which are now devoted to misfortune, would have become again prosperous. But now, dames must lose their husbands, the ground forfeit its fruits; young maidens will have no means of support, and many a knight must die in the combats which he is obliged to wage. All this, Perceval, is thy fault." Then, addressing the king directly, the sorceress tells him of the "*Proud Castle*," the "*Castel Orguellous*," where there are five hundred and sixty knights who have their ladies with them:

Noble ladies, quaint and fair.

Near the castle is a well, on the curb of which sits a damsel whom the king of the castle holds a prisoner.

Whoso lifts the siege may gain  
Honor great, if he release the maid.

This announcement of the sorceress is a summary of the rest of the romance. All the knights present during this scene, Gawain, Giflès, Gahadin, and fifty others

rise and solemnly swear never to rest until they have delivered the maiden at the well and the captive ladies in *Castel Orguellous*. Perceval promises that he will fight, until he knows what the Grail is, and until he finds the bleeding lance. Then all set themselves to their tasks immediately, Perceval, without doubt, taking his departure in advance of the others, for the poem speaks of him first.

For five years he had been wandering without entering a church, hardly even remembering the existence of a God, when one day, as he journeys onward, he meets knights and ladies walking barefoot and doing penance. He is astonished at such a sight, but one of the knights pauses and explains the matter to him.

. . . . . "Fair, sweet Sir,  
Dost not believe in Christ the Lord,  
Who by all Christians is adored,  
For whom a new law he has writ?  
Whom, therefore, it doth ill befit,  
Upon that day when Christ was slain,  
To carry arms."

Perceval, who has no idea of the time nor of the day, asks to what the knight alludes, and is told in reply:

"Knowst thou not the day, sweet youth?  
'Tis Holy Friday, in good sooth,  
When all bewail their guilt, and bow  
Before the cross, remembering how  
Their Lord was nailed thereon, when sold  
For thirty silver coins, as we're told;

Who, free from sin, beheld all men  
Dyed deep in guilt, and for them then  
Became a man, to save from sin."

. . . . .

"All who believe in him, to-day  
Must be repentant, neither may  
He who hath faith in God bear arms,  
Nor visit camps."

Then the knight relates the whole story of Christ's Passion, and for the first time we find Perceval moved to tears. From directions furnished by the penitents, he goes in quest of a hermit who lives near by, and to whom he confesses. This scene is one of the most beautiful in Chrétien's poem.

"My sweet friend," says the hermit, "tell me thy name." "Perceval, my lord." At these words the holy man sighs, for that name is not unknown to him.

"Friend, a sin, which thou hast overlooked, has done thee much harm, it is that which thou didst commit in leaving thy mother, and in letting her swoon in anguish before the door of her dwelling. Of that anguish she has died, and it is because of thy sin that thou didst not ask what the Grail is, and why the lance should bleed. But thy mother has prayed for thee, and her prayers are of such power that God has preserved thee from all harm thus far. Thy mother was my sister. The King Pécheur whom thou hast seen is



the son of the king who did service for the Grail : its virtue is so great that it supports and strengthens those who are in its service."

Profoundly moved by all that he has learned, Perceval understands at last, and, kneeling before the priest, he does humble penance.

"Even yet," the hermit adds, "mayst thou rise in worth and merit Paradise, if such be thy desire. Only believe in God and do good." Here we will cite Chrétien's beautiful verse :

"Have faith in God, love Him, and worship eke ;  
The worthy men and dames to honor seek ;  
In presence of a priest thou must arise,  
This is well-pleasing in our Father's eyes.  
The good Lord loveth him in verity,  
Who seeketh Him in true humility.  
If any maid should crave thine aid, then see  
Thou render it, and happy shalt thou be.  
Or should a widow or an orphan plead,  
'Twere then thy duty to relieve their need."

Let us note, in passing, the deeply humanitarian character of the good hermit's religious precept. Catholicism of that era does not show the violence or the bigoted fanaticism which is peculiar to it in later centuries. It appears here as a tender creed, most simple, yet broad, protecting the weak, restraining the strong, and aiming at the universal re-establishment of harmony and true poise in a society where, for two or

three centuries, brute force and savage passion had been the sole rule.

And Perceval is the perfected type of the knight, *i.e.*, of the Christian prince of that age.

To the portrayal of Perceval in this *rôle*, Chrétien was to devote the second part of his romance. Unfortunately, he has either not completed his poem, or, if he did finish it, his lost or mutilated manuscript underwent, after his death, regrettable alterations and numerous interpolations. Those who continued or copied it have introduced into the original a host of episodes and adventures utterly unimportant, and having no bearing upon the real subject of the poem.

Evidently the sequel of the work was to contain a complete narration of the quest for the Grail and the seizure of the bleeding lance, since Perceval made a solemn covenant with Gawain never to rest until he had obtained these precious relics.

Instead of this, however, we have a long series of adventures, and a number of personages described, who have but a remote connection with the Grail. We are given the full history of Gawain's amours, borrowed from another collection of Breton tales. To be sure, Gawain is Perceval's companion, and he too leaves in search for the blessed cup, but not more than two events of his wandering career connect him directly with the Grail: his combat with the wicked king of *Castel Orguellous*, and his visit to the palace of King

Pêcheur. Here he beholds the Grail, as Perceval not long before had done ; he also sees the bleeding lance and the silver dish, and he asks the essential questions. The coffin intended for King Pêcheur, who is waiting for death to release him from his sufferings, is shown him. However, as he is not the knight with the pure heart and guileless mind, who is destined to renew the mystery of the Grail, Gawain does not succeed in welding the pieces of the magic sword, which are given him. Thereupon the king pronounces him unworthy to know the secret of the Grail, and the knight falls into a deep sleep ; the adventure is a failure.

These are the only two episodes which are in keeping with the beginning of the poem, and which follow directly from it.

With regard to Perceval, it seems that Chrétien's successors thought it impossible to accumulate too many marvels or too many knightly accomplishments, in order to demonstrate in this central figure his advance in heroism and his successive stages toward human perfection. They show him in combat with knights, with wild beasts, and with giants ; he wages warfare with earth and with hell itself. Enchantments, snares, ambushes, the delights of love, all conspire to impede his progress and delay the acquisition of his moral independence ; but all serve to bring him nearer to it ; every test is but a step toward the ideal. Unfortunately, there is great confusion among all these inci-

dents. We can readily feel the unity of one arrangement in the general trend of this extensive poem, but the subject is drowned in the flood of adventures, which were probably added afterward. We even find the same episode told in two different ways in the same manuscript, which clearly proves the interpolation.

Moreover, all these stories follow in awkward succession, without apparent connection, and without preparation or transition. As soon as one adventure is finished, the story of another is begun. This method recalls exactly to our minds that of the Gothic painters, whose pictures show us all the figures pressed one upon the other in total disregard of the laws of ærial perspective, and without an indication of the ground ; all the objects, whether figures or accessories, are treated alike with the same painstaking exactitude, the same regard to truth, as if each were of equal importance in the ensemble of the composition.

From the books, or tales, that had come to his hands, the poet gathers all that relates to the heroes whom he would sing, and with a naïve conscience which nothing disturbs or annoys, he repeats all these events, trifling and great, without sparing us a single detail. But this, indeed, is the common fault in all mediæval literature.\*

\* Boileau, in speaking of "the confusion in the art of our ancient writers of romance," undoubtedly enunciated a well-founded criticism. Unfortunately, however, this dictum was interpreted too

Nevertheless, those who know how to read intelligently, what excellent pages, what charming forms, what traits of character closely observed, and described

literally, and, I fear, to the detriment of the development of French poetry. The inventive and imaginative faculties of the French grew wan in producing a barren imitation of antiquity or a labored *pasticcio* of pagan literature ; which were, however, an exact contradiction of the religious and mythological traditions of Gaul, and still more of the delicately dreamy and chivalric character of the race. For more than three centuries the entire department of æsthetics and all literary criticisms, as though hypnotized by the influence of Græco-Roman antiquity, shared Boileau's superficial disdain for the most beautiful monuments of mediæval art and poetry. Hardly half a century has elapsed since, thanks to the revolution in literary history and ideas brought about by such men as Ampère, Littré, and Augustin Thierry, we have arrived timidly and by degrees at a juster appreciation of such works. We declare it openly, that in these confused and long-despised poems there are inestimable treasures, incomparable marvels of sentiment and style which certainly equal, if they do not surpass, the correct yet cold beauty of the Greek and Latin masterpieces. But our high critique is indulgent toward the diffuseness of the good Homer—*quando dormitat bonus Homerus* ; it is full of reverence for the deceiving prolixity of tender Virgil and of the madrigals of Horace or of Catullus. As to our old romance writers, "confused art" answers all questions concerning them, and makes it wholly unnecessary to read them. The combat waged by Ulysses and his companions with the Cyclops is pronounced a masterpiece ; the struggle between Siegfried and the dragon an old wives' tale. Winged Pegasus and Apollo's glittering chariot are profound symbols ; the flight of the Valkyrias across the tempestuous sky of the north merely rude inventions of the northern mind. Circe's enchantments and Jupiter's metamorphoses afford delightful relaxation to the imagination ; the stories of fairies and of Merlin's sorceries are excellent to lull children to sleep withal.

Thus, during three centuries, the French critique vaticinates, servilely imitated by the contemporary critique. It exhibits a

with an amazingly correct touch, what vigor sometimes, what precision of utterance, and what fascination may they not find in these confused tales !

Thus, in the poem of "Perceval," despite the wearisome prolixity of the stories of combats which succeed one another without interruption, despite the superfluous wealth of adventures, in which the hero invariably plays the part of victor, you are held at every turn by some scene, most enchantingly described, and full of delicate or strong fancies admirably expressed. And these pages stand out as luminous points against the uniform and somewhat monotonous background.

One of the most seductive of such scenes is the tale of the loves of the hero and fair Blanche fleur.

In the first part of the poem Chrétien shows Perceval, as he arrives at the castle of *Beau Repaire*, where such havoc has been wrought that it deserves only the name *Château Dévasté* (Ruined Castle). Here he sees Blanche fleur for the first time, but he is still so awkward, so unsophisticated, and talks so little, that he is thought to be dumb and a fool. That night Blanche fleur thinks of the handsome knight, and goes in quest of particularly sharp judgment when it deals with poetry. To its eyes Victor Hugo is Homer on Patmos; and it is so confident of its own superiority, so self-assured, that the most beautiful creations of poetic genius bring a smile of scepticism to its lips. Poor thing, it does not realize that, for the most part, it reasons upon matters of art according to the mode of those two sublime spirits, Bouvard and Pécuchet, in whom is summed up the mediocrity of the present time.

him to tell him of her woes ; for on the morrow the castle must be surrendered, and she will be delivered to her brutal adversary who wants to marry her against her will. At this point the poet paints one of those enticing scenes, so fresh and full of charm, where unreserved confidence and a delightful modesty are combined with sweet and delicate coquetry, not without a spice of mischief, in graceful contrast with the awkwardness, the ignorance, and the simplicity of young Perceval. Perceval leaves *Beau Repaire* as he came, but the image of Blanchefleur remains deeply graven on his mind ; he will conquer for her, and, in fact, he does overcome the tyrant who is her persecutor.

Now, one day, after innumerable adventures have been moulding him, he meets her again. He recognizes neither the country nor the castle of *Beau Repaire*, which have again become flourishing. Even Blanchefleur's features he does not recognize, but she, on the contrary, knows him at once :

“ Sure no man hath ever seen  
In this mortal world, I ween,  
Any who more like may be  
To my friend, my doux ami,  
Perceval, whom I love well,  
Who, for my sake, it befell,  
Suffered many cruel woes,  
Ere he could subdue my foes  
And restore my lands to me.”



Perceval does not know where he is ; he questions her and discovers that he is at *Beau Repaire*, and in the presence of Blanche fleur :

He heard, and with a little sigh,  
His color changing, fixed his eye  
Upon the maid, whose visage bright  
Rendered him pensive, that he might  
Not utter word or speak.

Then, in his turn, he tells his name, and Blanche fleur, throwing herself on his neck, embraces him madly,

More than a hundred times before releasing him.

Then she summons her servants and gives them a great *fête*, at which she presides, radiant and proud, at the hero's right hand. Chrétien describes Perceval's happiness by a form-effect of an original movement which is singularly expressive :

And Perceval is a happy wight,  
He hath now all his heart's delight,  
Naught to complain of, all is joy,  
All merriment, without alloy,  
His lady's face so pure and white,  
Is as a flower in his sight.

And here only do we learn that it was indeed Blanche fleur of whom Perceval dreamed when he saw the three drops of blood on the snow.

Then the two lovers find themselves alone. Their

interview has a delicious grace and freshness. Night has fallen, and townsfolk and knights have withdrawn; Blanchefleur's maidens have taken her to her chamber, and Perceval has been conducted to his own apartment; all are asleep in the palace, yet neither Blanchefleur nor her knight can win slumber, they are thinking of each other :

Perceval wakes while others sleep,  
In his thoughts he's fain to keep  
The mem'ry of this marvel great,  
That he again has found la Belle,  
And that the maid remembers him.

Blanchefleur has the image of her friend so constantly on her mind that she rises at last, throws an ermine mantle about her shoulders, and artlessly seeks Perceval's couch, "all alone, without any attendant," adds the poet. Unhesitatingly she lies down beside him, and Perceval clasps her in his arms. They had much to tell each other, and to question and answer.

At daybreak they are still talking, and Blanchefleur asks Perceval to wed her. But here the Grail is introduced. Perceval has a mission to fulfil, which he will not abandon for "all the gold in Frise." He is in the world to regain the Grail, and he will not waver.

Blanchefleur, familiar with the duties of a knight's lady, does not detain him; she submits, and her ex-

pressions of sorrow have a tenderness and an artless grace which are almost sublime.

“ When thou didst leave me once before,  
Ever in mind thy words I bore ;  
That to thy mother thou wert fain  
To go, to see her, but again  
Without delay wouldst come to me.  
Whence, therefore, I awaited thee,  
And once more will await thee here,  
Albeit 'gainst my will, so drear  
Will be the waiting. Liefer, tho',  
Am I to bear it, than to go  
Against thy wishes.”

With such simple resignation, with such confidence of a heartfelt love, she dismisses the knight whom she loves so tenderly.

And now behold Perceval on his travels once more, riding through the green forests. After all sorts of vicissitudes he reaches at last the solitary manor where he was brought up. He weeps with joy. A sister, whom he barely remembers, receives him ; he goes to his mother's tomb, there to pay his last tribute of love. He again meets the wise man who gave him his first instructions ; here his whole past rises before him, and he is profoundly moved. But there is no rest for him until he has accomplished the work he has vowed to perform, and tearing himself away from domestic happiness, as he has already done from the pleasures of

love, he again sets out through the forest. A young girl riding on a white mule shows him the road which leads to the castle where reigns the king "*who guards the rich Grail and the lance which emits at its point the ruddy drop of blood.*"

The nearer he approaches his goal, the more obstacles he finds in his path. A glass bridge which he must cross before reaching the region of the Grail, terrifies him no more than did the sea of fire intimidate Siegfried, when he has to pass through it to win Brunhilde. The king's enemy is still alive, and, in the name of the God who "pardoned Longis," Perceval vows to combat him and thus revenge the monarch's woes. No enchantment can detain him. Satan assumes the form of Blanchefleur, but the hero makes the sign of the cross and the apparition disappears; he whom love itself could not bind in its chains is not to be disturbed by the mere phantom of love. Then Perceval encounters the knight Hector, who is as valiant as he. They fight and both are mortally wounded. In the agonies of death they recognize each other as knights of the good King Artus; they exchange mutual forgiveness, and bid each other a tender farewell. Midnight strikes, when lo, a wonderful brilliancy illuminates the heavens, and an angel, bearing a vase in his hands, descends upon a ray of light. Three times he walks around the dying knights, and both arise, healed by the relic of Calvary, by the Grail, which Perceval at

last recognizes and adores. This miracle is decisive. Neither earth nor hell can now prevail against the hero, whose courage has withstood all tests and whose initiation is now complete. Perceval meets Pertianax, the king's enemy ; he marches against him, slays him, and severing his head from his body, carries it to King Pécheur. Upon seeing it, the king of the Grail is healed, and gives thanks to God. All the inmates of the castle celebrate the event, and this feast of retribution is served by the Grail, by the sacred chalice which caught Christ's blood.

Such is the *dénouement* which Chrétien's successors have furnished for his poem.

Mr. Potvin has published a prose edition of "Perceval," in which the quest for the Grail is undertaken simultaneously by Perceval, or Perlesvaux, by Gawain, and by Lancelot of the Lake. This work is taken from a manuscript of the thirteenth century, preserved at Mons, and written by order of the Archbishop of Cambrai, "that the truth might be known by all good knights, so that they would suffer pain and strive for the advancement of the Christian faith."

This prose romance is not without interest, although it lacks the poetic grace and the lofty thought and sentiment of Chrétien's poem. It is especially devoid of that tenderness, that spontaneity, and seductive candor which we find in the latter ; but, on the other hand, it is remarkable for its unity of composition, and for the

sound logic displayed in the development of its adventures. Here you will find no love scenes and but little humanity. The spirit of theocracy dominates the entire narrative. Upon glancing through it, you would think it a pamphlet directed against the enemies of the Church. Perceval says of his uncle, the pagan king who has become possessor of the Grail, "He is no longer of my family, since he has denied God. One must consider him as a mortal foe, and must hate him more than strangers." Perceval is an apostle, almost a saint. He "was pure and chaste, and wanted to die in chastity."

The hero's character is vigorously drawn in these few words: "Head of gold, eyes of the lion, heart of steel, and escutcheon of virgin purity."

The first exploit of this youth is, as in Chrétien's "Perceval," the slaying of a knight with one thrust of his lance, but this murder cries for vengeance. After Perceval has left his mother's home, the enemies of his family regain their audacity, and his sister is abducted by a knight whose name is Arestot. Immediately Perceval comes to the rescue. "I have come to my sister's wedding, it could not take place without me," he cries. Arestot, wounded and vanquished, begs for mercy, but Perceval cuts off his head and carries it to his sister. "Damsel, weep no more, here is the head of him who would have done you violence."

His mother is besieged in her castle; but Perceval is

again victorious. The defeated foe, the knight of the Moors, surrenders, asks for mercy, and offers to make some atonement for the wrong the lady has suffered at his hands. "And who will compensate her for the shame you have brought upon her?" says Perceval. "Who will restore her knights whom you have slain? You had no mercy for anyone; now, may God forsake me if my mother show mercy to you! God commands justice to be meted out to murderers and to traitors, according to his laws, both old and new." And Perceval hereupon orders the throats of eleven prisoners to be cut; he fills a tub with the blood, and, having disarmed the Moorish champion, has him tightly bound, hand and foot, and suspended by the feet over the tub in such a manner "that his head was in the blood up to his shoulders." "You could never get satiated with the blood of my lady mother's knights, but I shall satiate you with the blood of your own knights."

This cruelty of Perceval is not in the primitive legend, it is of monkish invention. Paganism begins to rear its head; the Grail is in peril; the Church, in order to establish her authority, must needs deal pitilessly with all her adversaries, and she makes of the traditional hero, the "*preux chevalier*," a ferocious warrior such as we have just seen.

"O, that you could blot out the evil power!" exclaims a hermit who would indicate this to Perceval



as his mission in life. "May all who refuse to be baptized perish by your sword," says to him the queen whom he has delivered from the tyranny of the knight of the dragon.

Such is the spirit of the prose romance. Here Perceval does not attain human perfection according to the law of Christianity, he is the fanatical and ferocious defender of the Church. The Grail itself is no longer the symbol of all knightly virtues, it becomes the symbol of the new law and of the omnipotence of the Church. Perceval's bitterest foe is the king of the Castle of Death, "*Chastel Mortel*," as it is called, "wherein there are as many vices as there were virtues in the castle of King Artus." The king of the *Chastel Mortel* has seized the possessions of King Pécheur, including the bleeding lance and the Grail. His vassals have returned to paganism. In order to bring them back to the true faith, Perceval is going to make war upon them.

In short, Perceval's adventures in this work are so many episodes of a genuine religious war. When the wicked king of *Chastel Mortel* sees that the victory will be in Perceval's favor, he hurls himself from the wall into the abyss beneath, and the author adds, "The end of the evil-doer is evil." This is the moral the pamphlet conveys. The estates of the castle are consecrated anew to the Christian faith, the Grail as well as the lance reappear in the chapel of the castle, and invisible voices sing "*Te Deum Laudamus*."

Once christianized, the legend becomes more and more specialized.

Robert de Boron also abounds in details which indicate the predominance of religious thoughts over purely poetic inspiration ; this romancer of Franche-Comté puts not only the authentic gospels, but also the apocryphal writings, under contribution. Thus from the Gospel of Nicodemus he borrows the account of Jesus appearing to Joseph of Arimathea, while the latter is in prison.\* But whereas in this gospel Christ enumerates all the things which were used at His burial, in order to be recognized by Joseph, who still doubts, in Robert de Boron's poem Christ brings the very vessel of the Lord's Supper, the Grail, to Joseph of Arimathea. In a dialogue between Jesus and Joseph, Robert de Boron recalls to us the manner in which the bread and wine were consecrated, and became the body and blood of the Saviour, and how afterward the sacrament of the Eucharist was instituted. The winding-sheet, wherein Christ was wrapped, becomes the altar-cloth, the chalice from which the priest drinks is nothing less than the cup in which Joseph caught the sacred blood, the paten which covers the cup represents the stone that was sealed before Christ's tomb. The mass likewise is represented as a semblance of the death and

\* The legend says that Joseph of Arimathea was imprisoned after Christ's resurrection, on the charge of having stolen the body of the Crucified.

burial of Jesus ; it is a kind of commemorative ceremony.

When Jesus gives the chalice to Joseph He tells him that the Grail is to serve as a reminder of His sacrifice, that it will become " the token of His death," and that, at the same time, it will recall the Last Supper throughout all ages.

Henceforth all who see the Grail will belong to Christ's followers, or to the Christian community. During forty-two years the mere sight of the Grail nourishes and strengthens Joseph of Arimathea in his dungeon, and, when set at liberty, he founds a religious society, whose members vow exclusive worship of the Grail. As Joseph is dying he bequeaths the vessel to his brother-in-law, Bron, who disappears with it. Then it falls into the hands of pagans, from whom to rescue it again is now the question. The search for the sacred relic is what the writers call the quest of the Grail.

Soon Perceval is no longer the only knight who consecrates himself to this pious mission. In the memory of the crusades, the object of which was to deliver Christ's tomb from the Mohammedans and to secure the sacred relics, Perceval becomes a legion. In a later work, under the title of " The Quest of the Holy Grail," it is Galahad, son of Lancelot, who finds it again and becomes its recognized defender.

This " Quest of the Holy Grail " which appeared

under Robert de Boron's name has been lost in French, but is still extant in Portuguese translation. The poem was revised about 1220 and inserted in its entirety in the prose work of "Launcelot."

The feature that distinguishes all these versions from the primitive version of Chrétien de Troies, is that the hero fighting for the Grail loses more and more of his knightly character. In the later works the Grail is reserved for a knight of absolute purity, and love, which enters into Perceval's adventures according to Chrétien de Troies, has disappeared almost entirely in the "Perceval" of Robert de Boron, and has no part whatever in the "Quest of the Holy Grail."

In Germany they seem to have inverted altogether the order of the successive transformations of the legend, taking as their starting-point the error that Robert de Boron's poems are anterior to that of Chrétien de Troies, whereas the reverse is true.

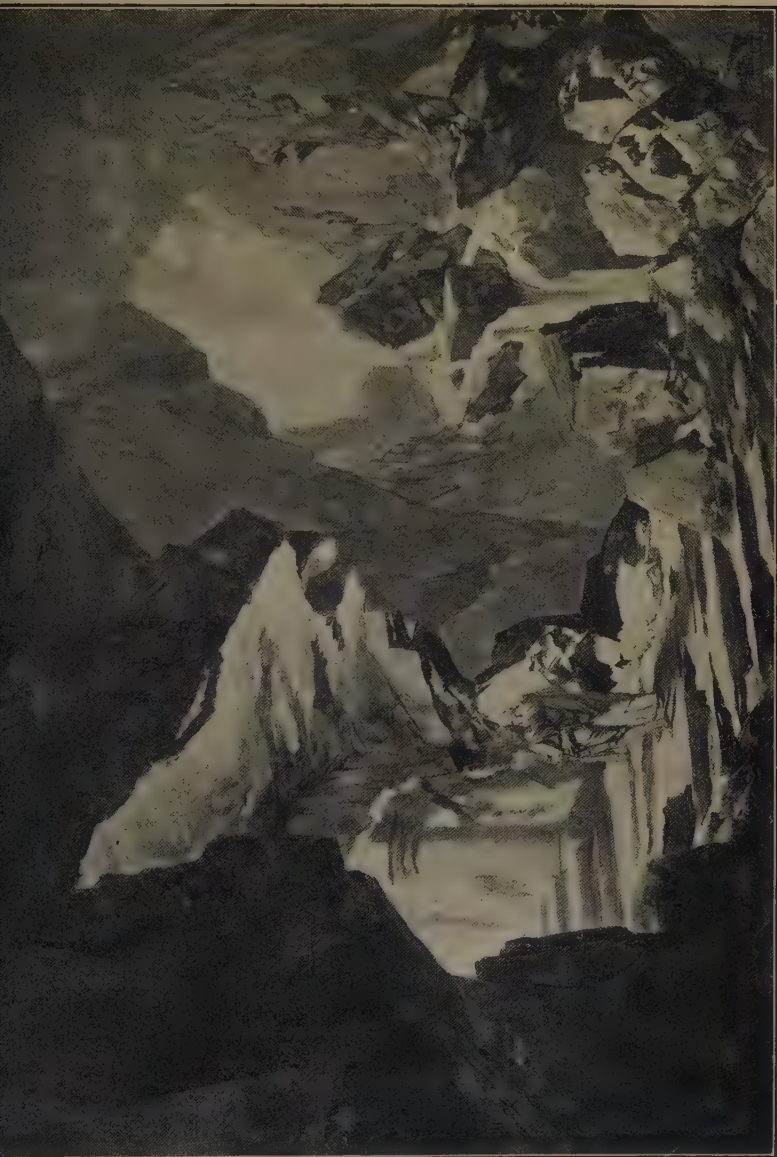
As the story of Perceval and of the Grail spreads throughout convents and castles, it becomes more imbued with the mysticism of the environment where it is developed. Thus the Knights of the Grail ultimately become members of an actual knightly brotherhood, and have but a vague resemblance to the knights of the Round Table. They have lost that tinge of chivalric gallantry whereby poetic imagination represented an ideal society at the close of the twelfth century, when letters and the arts took such lofty flights, at the same

time that manners and customs became softened after a long period of terrible convulsions and bloody struggles. The organization of society is improved and minds are being disciplined—indeed, these two phenomena are necessarily parallel. The powerful hierarchy established in the Church puts its despotic impress upon the entire lay society.

Our knightly romances permit us to follow very closely the movement of the minds and the transformation of the customs of those days. Robert de Boron gives the Knights of the Round Table the organization of the monastic and chivalric orders which, during his era, were in their fullest efflorescence. The Knights of the Grail take vows of chastity, of purity, and of obedience. King Amfortas is stricken with the terrible disease from which he suffers because he has looked too complacently upon the beautiful form of a sinful young woman who has prostrated herself before the Grail.

Chrétien de Troies knows no such nice distinctions. There is in his poem no question even of marriage, but of love only, of courtly love such as, in his time, a circle of high-born ladies, having his patroness, Marie de Champagne, at their head, dreamed it to be. Love is even considered incompatible with marriage. Probably these ideas originated at the petty courts of southern France, where we find them expressed in the lyric poetry of the troubadours. They spread the more

rapidly in the north, because princely and aristocratic marriages between the families of the north and the south were very numerous during this epoch. It is quite natural that the Church should have endeavored, if not to combat, at least to discipline this worldly spirit ; hence mysticism invaded the poems of chivalry more and more.







## PARZIVAL.

THE "Parzival" of Wolfram von Eschenbach, the chief source of Richard Wagner's drama, is a felicitous combination of these different ways of considering the same subject. Although animated by a fervent mysticism, the legend has retained in the German poem its chivalric character and its touching simplicity. This poem is besides, of the works on this subject, the one in which the greatest clearness and unity of composition prevails.

Wolfram, the most eloquent and erudite of Suabian poets, has collected two series of legends relating to his hero and to the Grail. His inspiration was derived partly from the *Perceval* by Chrétien de Troies, and partly, at least, as he avers, from poems of Provençal origin. The sources he mentions are the works of a poet whom he calls Kiot or Kyot, who was said to have borrowed from a manuscript of an Arabian poet, Flegetanis by name, which manuscript was discovered by Kyot in Toledo. From this he was said to have taken the whole history of the precious stone called the Grail; and in the *Chronicle of Anjou* he was said to have

found all that relates to the history of the guardians of this precious object.

These two statements, on Wolfram's part, have given rise to interminable disputes and to numberless hypotheses. Who is this Provençal poet, Kiot or Kyot? Some philologists suppose him to be identical with Guiot of Provence; but, as we possess only a satiric poem from the pen of this writer, we have no authority for the belief that he left a work upon the Grail legend. Other scholars hold that this pretended poet of Provence is a creation of Wolfram's imagination, invented in order to justify, in the opinion of his readers, and to support, by foreign authority, the alterations introduced by him into the legend, as it is found in the work of Chrétien de Troies and the other poets of northern France. The same is true of Flegetanis. Wolfram tells us that this poet is the son of a Jewish father by his pagan wife, and that it is he who gives, in the manuscript found by Kiot in Toledo, an account of the marvellous virtue of the Grail. History completely ignores the existence of this Arabian poet, which seems to give some foundation to the theory of those who believe that Kiot and Flegetanis have both been evolved from Wolfram's imagination, in order to meet the exigencies of his cause. It is to be remarked, however, that in Wolfram von Eschenbach's writings, the names of southern places are of frequent occurrence; he mentions Toledo, Sevilla, Sicily, Capua, and the plains of

Galicia, which proves that he drew from other sources besides the authors of northern France, where the whole story of the Grail, as well as the adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, are laid in Breton countries, now in continental Brittany, and now in England. Then, too, southern and oriental influences (perhaps attributable to the Arabian, Flegetanis) give rise, in Wolfram's poem, to certain details that distinguish it very plainly from the French poems. Thus, he does not make the Grail the vessel in which the blood of the Crucified One was received, it is with him a precious stone. Now we know that all oriental peoples attribute curative and talismanic properties to precious stones, and the pretended Arabian manuscript, found in Toledo, may have been nothing else, after all, than a scientific treatise, so common in the early part of the Middle Ages, in which were compiled the superstitions, transmitted by the Ancients, concerning stones, birds, and animals. In this way may be explained the important part which Wolfram assigns to sorcery and occult arts, which appear in the French poem only at the very end, in the portions added after Chrétien de Troies's death.

But whatever there may be in this interesting enigma, the mere outlines of which it will suffice to indicate here, Wolfram composed from the data of the legend, gathered from the north and south of France, a sort of trilogy, which furnishes us with the entire

history of the Grail and of its knights, from its beginning to the end.

Titurel, the first of these poems, of which Wolfram wrote only the beginning, but which was continued at great length after his death, relates the story of the first knight or king of the Grail. According to Wolfram, Titurel is the son of a king of Cappadocia and of the sister of the Emperor Vespasian. He receives the Grail from heaven as a reward of his noble deeds.

Being charged with the erection of a sanctuary to enshrine this precious stone, which symbolizes all virtues, he superintends the construction of a temple at Montsalvat, in the mountains of Galicia (Spain). Titurel subsequently weds Réchude, a Spanish princess, and becomes the father and ancestor of a numerous and illustrious posterity, whose adventures fill the trilogy. After having reigned one hundred years his appearance is still that of a young man, by virtue of the Grail's potency. Nevertheless he bequeaths his royal state to his eldest son, Frimutel, who is slain in a combat with the infidels. The kingdom of the Grail passes then into the hands of Amfortas, during whose reign it is threatened by grave perils. Amfortas permits himself to become infatuated, first, with the Mohammedan queen, Secondille, and later with the beautiful Duchess Orgueulouse (*Orgueilleuse*), in whose service he has a duel with an infidel knight who seeks to obtain possession of the Grail. In this combat Amfortas is

seriously wounded by a spear-thrust. In a dying condition he is carried to the temple, where, for a long time, he lingers, cruelly tortured through his wound, which will not heal, until a hero, predestined for this work, comes to his relief and assumes the kingship of the Grail.

The advent of this hero is foretold Amfortas by the Grail itself. One day, when the wounded monarch is prostrated before the sacred relic, engaged in fervent prayer, an inscription in letters of fire appears, surrounding the stone. It predicts that a knight will come, who must ask a question about the Grail ; should he fail to ask it at the proper moment, the question will lose its curative power ; if, on the other hand, he proposes it at the appointed hour, King Amfortas will recover, but he can wear the crown no longer, as it will belong to the newly arrived knight.\*

This hero is Parzival, who is the subject of Wolfram's second poem.

The third portion of the trilogy contains the story of Lohengrin, Parzival's son, and the last king of the Grail.

Wolfram prefaces the poem of "Parzival" by a short

\* Thus understood, the question relating to the Grail might well be only a remote reminder of the riddle which the Sphinx gave Œdipus to solve. Whether a question be asked, or a riddle be solved, the underlying idea is the same, since in both instances the deliverance of a ruined dynasty and the advent of a new one depended upon this act.

introduction, in which he hastily sketches the history of the hero's parents. They are Gahmuret, second son of the king of Anjou, and Herzeleide, Titurel's daughter, and sovereign of the two kingdoms of Wales and Norgal. As victor in the tourney held at Kaerdeis, the Welsh capital, Gahmuret obtains Herzeleide's hand in marriage, although he secretly loves Queen Anflise of France. Herzeleide endeavors to turn him from a life of adventure, but he exacts a promise from her that she shall allow him to participate in a tourney every month. Shortly after their marriage Gahmuret returns to the Orient, where he is killed in a battle with the Infidels. Herzeleide learns of his death as she is about to give birth to Parzival, and the tragic tidings lead her to decide that she will bring up her child in deepest seclusion, far from the world and the temptations of a knightly career.

Here, then, begins Parzival's history. The whole story of his youth follows Chrétien's narrative very closely. Indeed several important incidents are translated literally from the French, while others are merely imitated. The beginning of the work is taken in its entirety from Chrétien's poem; the hero's first meeting with the knights, his departure, his adventure with the damsel whom he kisses, and his subsequent encounter with her husband, his arrival at the castle of King Pécheur, where he sees the Grail for the first time, his adventure at the castle of *Beau Repaire*, written by



Wolfram "Pelrapoer," etc. Other incidents are suppressed, however, as, for instance, Perceval's first arrival at King Artus's court and his combat with the red knight. In the latter part of Chrétien's romance, especially, the German poet very judiciously omits a great deal and condenses all his material.

Upon comparing these two romances one is chiefly struck by the constant endeavor shown in Wolfram's poem to allege due motives for the several incidents of the story, and thus to connect them more intimately with its principal figure, as well as with the work as a whole.

For instance, he gives names to characters for whom Chrétien has no such appellations. Thus Perceval's mother, Kamuelles, is a very impersonal creation in Chrétien's poem, but Wolfram makes her Titurel's daughter, and calls her Herzeleide, a most significant name, which may be translated "Sorrowful One," or, more literally, "Sorrow of the Heart" (from Herz, heart, and Leid, sorrow or suffering). The unhappy princess's life is almost epitomized in her name, for, after losing her husband, she sees her son escape from her tender care, and finally succumbs to the grief which his departure causes her.

Then again Wolfram distorts in German the proper names, or the typical designations of his characters. Thus l'Orgueilleux de la Lande becomes a proper name. Wolfram makes of this personage the Duke

Orilus de Lalander; he forms of the adjective "angevin" (originally "of Anjou") a man's name, "Anchewein;" the beautiful Blanchfleur is called by him Kundwiramur; the worthy wise man, Gonemans de Gelbort, who receives and educates Perceval, is known as Gurnemans de Graharz, and finally, the sorceress, mounted on a mule, who visits Artus's court at Karlion, and whose hideous and savage appearance Chrétien describes, is naively called in German *Kondrie la Sorzier*.

Occasionally he develops an idea at great length, which Chrétien has merely touched upon; and he adds more than one original and felicitous trait to his characters. For example, before relating Parzival's first meeting with the knights, he shows us the youth wandering through the woods, taking a strange pleasure in listening to the songs of the birds. He cuts a bow and some arrows, with which to catch them, but when he has killed one, he weeps over its dead body, because the bird will never sing again. Throwing his bow and arrows away, he stretches himself under a tree, and there, with swelling breast, he listens in dismay to the joyous twittering in the branches. *Herzeleide* is troubled by the awakening of the lad's passions and by his long reveries; she would even have the trees and bushes beaten in order to drive the feathered tribe away, but Parzival implores her to leave his songsters alone, and with an embrace the mother replies: "How

should I infringe the Almighty God's law of peace ! How should these birds be deprived of happiness by me ! ” “ Mother,” queries Parzival, “ who is God ? ” Herzeleide tells him, and thus is the first step taken in his initiation. This scene, it must be acknowledged, forms an appropriate preface to Parzival's encounter with the knights.

Wolfram also introduces an important modification in the incident of Parzival's intrigue with Blanchesfleur or Kundwiramur. Chrétien leaves us in doubt as to whether they are really married, but in the German poem Kundwiramur, after being delivered from her foe, bestows her hand upon Parzival, and the lovers are legitimately united. There is an unquestionable reason for this alteration, for Parzival is to become the father of Lohengrin, the hero of the crusades.

The incident of Percival's first arrival at the castle of King Pêcheur is amplified in the same way and greatly modified by Wolfram. To Chrétien's account he adds a long description of the marvels of the castle.

In a vast hall, lighted by a hundred chandeliers, four hundred knights are resting upon a hundred divans. Logs of aloë-wood, burning in three marble fireplaces, give out delicious odors. A double-door that shines like polished steel opens to admit four princesses, clad in scarlet and bearing golden candelabra ; they are followed by eight damsels dressed in robes of green velvet, who carry a table of pomegranate-wood. Six others,

magnificently attired in silk, bear silver vases, and six more attend the fairest of the fair, the noble virgin Repanse de Schoie (probably corrupted from Repaire de Joie) who, says Wolfram, carries an object of wondrous brilliancy known as the Grail, which she places before the king. Through a half-opened door Parzival beholds also an aged man, with snow-white hair, reclining on a divan in an adjoining apartment; this is Titurel.

It is a characteristic circumstance that Wolfram distinguishes carefully between the Knights of the Round Table and the Knights of the Grail; the latter he calls *Templars*. According to Chrétien, the knights who inhabit King Pêcheur's castle differ in nowise from other knights, but Wolfram describes them as constituting a community or religious order. Evidently the poet has in mind the Order of Templars of Jerusalem, which, at the end of the twelfth century, represented the highest ideal of Christian knighthood. The Templars took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and the end and aim of their mission, both political and social, was to fight the Infidels and to defend the Faith everywhere. The Knights of the Grail were bound by similar vows. Robert de Boron goes so far as to impose a vow of chastity upon the kings of the Grail, who were not permitted to marry; but Wolfram makes an exception in favor of the head of the order, since Titurel, Frimutel, and Parzival himself were married.

The imitation, however, is none the less evident.

As in Chrétien's narrative, Parzival does not ask the question upon which depends Amfortas's restoration to health, and this omission kindles the wrath of the Templars against him. On the following morning, as he is leaving the castle and the wooden bridge is raised behind him, a retainer (Knappe) cries aloud to him from the top of a tower: "May the anger of the sun pursue you; you are nothing but a goose!" The poet depicts the hero waiting a long time before the castle gate, bent upon avenging the insult that has been cast in his teeth, and deploring the silliness which he has evinced. These are details which emphasize the increasing pride, the more defined consciousness of self, and the moral development of Parzival.

After resuming his journey he meets his cousin-german (called Sigune in this poem) in the forest; her story is narrated at length in "Titurel." Seated at the foot of a linden-tree, she silently mourns her husband's death. From her Parzival learns of his birth and of his rights: in despair he accuses fate and bewails his fatal error, believing himself abandoned of God. A prey to these violent and contradictory emotions he plunges again into the forest, and thus reaches the vicinity of Artus's camp. Here, one morning, he pauses, as in Chrétien's account, to contemplate the three drops of blood spilled upon the snow. Instead of a crow's blood, however, Wolfram says it was that of a goose,

which was attacked by one of Artus's train of falcons. Here Gawain (called Gawan in the poem) finds Parzival lost in dreams of Kundwiramur, as he gazes at the crimson stains upon the pure white snow.

Wolfram's German commentators give him the credit of originating this charming incident, apparently overlooking the fact that it is found in its entirety in Chrétien's work, and that Wolfram translates it almost *verbatim*. This blunder, doubtless, is to be explained by the fact of the extreme rarity of French editions of Chrétien's poems, which obliges Germans to content themselves with the more or less imperfect *résumés* to be found in histories of literature and in philological works upon Chrétien's language. And it must be said, furthermore, that the great works of German philologists which treat of mediæval literature antedate these French editions.

During Parzival's stay at Artus's court, while they are celebrating his admission to the Order of the Round Table, Kondrie, the sorceress, appears upon the scene. At this point Wolfram's poem begins to separate very clearly from the French "Perceval." Wolfram assigns the Dame Hydeuse a far more important *rôle* than does Chrétien. With the former she is nothing less than the messenger of the Grail. Her arrival at the palace, as well as her appearance, are in this work analogous to the scene with Dame Hydeuse which Chrétien describes; but Wolfram brings out the portrait more dis-

tinctly by the addition of certain details of his own. He tells us that the maiden knows *all* the languages—French, Arabic (called the heathen tongue), and Latin—and, more than that, has studied dialectics, geometry, and astronomy. Her address to King Artus is much more violent and significant than that which Chrétien puts into her mouth, and the German poet informs us that she addressed the king in French.

“Son of King Utpendragon” (Uterpendragon), she exclaims, “thou hast called down more than one humiliation upon thyself and upon the Bretons. The dough-tiest knights in the world would be seated at this table if poison did not lurk in your midst. The Round Table is undone, for there is a traitor among you. O, King Artus, thy glory, which was above the glory of all other kings, is even now about to vanish; thy dignity halts, for falsity is mixed with loyalty. The valor of the Round Table is weakened since ye have received Parzival among you, him whom I see adorned with the insignia of the knights.” Then turning to Parzival, she continues, “And thou, do thy penance; because of thee I must refuse to greet King Artus and his knights. Why, Sir Parzival, oh, why hast thou not delivered the mournful King Pécheur, when thou beheld’st him stretched before thee, without consolation and without joy. He did tell thee of his exceeding great torments; surely his misery should have inspired thee with pity, thou ungrateful guest! May thy tongue be plucked



from thy mouth, since no sense of what is right dwelleth in thy breast. He who reigneth in the heavens hath condemned thee to the infernal regions, and thou wilt be abhorred by men, exiled from honor, and deprived of happiness, thou who hast spurned the purest of all glories. Thou hast withdrawn from earthly honor, and thy bravery suffers from an ill that no leech may ever cure ! ”

Parzival, who does not feel guilty of any crime or error, thus sees himself suddenly driven away and banished from the society of the knights. Overcome by doubt he falls a victim to despair. In vain do his companions seek to revive his courage and to detain him : he has now but a single thought, is held by a single ardent vow, to atone for the wrong he has done ; he swears not to appear before the eyes of the world again until he has found the Grail and saved Amfortas.

Just as he is departing he is held by Gawain, who invokes God's blessing upon him. “ Ah, woe ! ” cries Parzival, “ what is God ? If He were omnipotent, He would never have allowed so great a disgrace. Since that day when I acknowledged His mercy I have served him loyally ; but now I abjure Him and am ready to endure His hate ! ” and, followed by the tears and lamentations of the women, Parzival hastens from the castle.

This scene, which Chrétien tells in a *naïve* manner, has in Wolfram's poem a dramatic tone, a remarkable

tragic force, and the poetic expression is as powerful as the conception.

Wolfram shows us next Parzival a prey to his remorse and doubt. For a long time the hero journeys through different countries, feared everywhere and always victorious. His thoughts often turn to his beloved wife, whom he has left behind him ; his mind is engrossed by the desire to find the Grail, but he is harassed continually and finds nowhere in his wanderings the true rest, tranquillity of soul. In short, Wolfram develops considerably the moral side of his hero's character, which, to a certain extent, is only touched upon in the French work. Not until he has shown us Parzival abandoned to the evil results of his sin are we permitted to witness his conversion and his return to the true faith. Here, as in Chrétien's poem, Parzival meets a knight upon a certain Good Friday, who guides a band of pilgrims and who is astonished that Parzival should carry arms upon this day of universal repentance. Parzival listens to the story of Christ's passion, told by the knight, and he is moved, but he still resists his own feeling. He *will* not yield, and this trait is profoundly observed, for there is no wrong, however serious, in which the wrongdoer does not persist ; this is the *diabolicum perseverare* which follows the *humanum errare*.

Accordingly, Parzival does not allow himself to be convinced, and he does not at once direct his steps, as in Chrétien's story, to the minster whither the pilgrims

are bound. He suffers too much near these happy souls who believe in divine grace, while he is pursued by divine wrath. What should he do at the hermitage and in the minster? Finally, however, repentance prevails, and, turning his horse's head, Parzival retraces his course, following the pilgrims from afar, until he reaches the worthy hermit, Trevezent. The whole episode has thus, in Wolfram's poem, a sterner moral import than in Chrétien's.

When Parzival has entered the hermit's cell his first words remind us forcibly and succinctly of the struggle he has undergone with himself: "Sire, give me your counsel, for I am a man whom sin hath overcome!" Trevezent, who is a brother of King Amfortas, and hence Parzival's uncle, solves his doubts. He reminds him of the truths of Christianity and speaks of the treasures of divine mercy and of the mystic power of the Grail. Finally, when Parzival makes himself known, the hermit announces Herzeleide's death. "Alas, my Lord," cries Parzival in the depths of despair, "the Grail itself, were it mine, could not console me for this loss!" This admirable outburst does not occur in Chrétien's verse.

Then Trevezent relates all the woes of his family: how Amfortas was wounded, and what vain attempts have been made to heal him, and how, at last, the predestinated knight one day arrived at the castle of King Pécheur, but neglected to ask the momentous question.

Thus Parzival hears his own condemnation once more, but suffers the humiliation in silence. Not till the next day does he confess to Trevezent that the knight who failed to ask the question is none other than himself.

There still remains rebelliousness and lack of discernment in Parzival's soul, but the good recluse will complete what he has begun so auspiciously. After having bewailed his disciple's sin, he comforts, encourages, and uplifts him, persuading him not to doubt God's mercy, but to repent sincerely, and to mortify the flesh by sharing his solitude and privations for two weeks. The discourse of the worthy priest has all the tenderness of the words which are uttered by Chrétien's "Preudomme," but the priest speaks with greater eloquence. Besides this, the form of the venerable Trevezent is drawn by a master's hand, and the old man's head, crowned by its snowy locks, stands out in admirable relief from the background of the poem. After having well instructed Parzival he dismisses him, recommending him to the grace of God.

After having presented his principal character so skilfully, Wolfram pays very little heed to the adventures which are attributed to him in the French legend ; he suppresses a good half of them and moves straight on to the conclusion. Parzival has undergone a succession of the most terrible ordeals. He has raised himself by degrees from his first state of perfect simplicity ; from utter ignorance of himself he has come to

the simultaneous exercise of charity and heroism. Two crucial tests still await him, but before narrating these Wolfram depicts in rapid scenes the disorder of King Artus's secular and worldly court, which he contrasts with the peaceful court of the Grail king. The moral aim of the poem remains always in the foreground. The hero of the adventures described is Gawan (Gawain).

Gawan also has gone in quest of the Grail, but by different ways from those which Parzival follows. His courage equals that of the predestinated hero, but he does not possess the same depth of sentiment, nor the same strength of character; he does not resist worldly temptations as Parzival does. During his life of errantry Gawan reaches the castle of perdition, or *Châtel Merveil*, of which *Klinschor*, the magician, is lord. This *Klinschor* has a naïvely eccentric history. He is the Duke of Capua in the "Country of Labor," according to Wolfram's text, and the nephew of the magician, *Virgil of Naples*. He had seduced *Biblis*, the beautiful wife of King *Ibert of Sicily*, and having been surprised in her arms by the wronged husband, the latter reduces him with a single blow of the sword to the condition of a "capon," as Wolfram expresses it. Filled with the spirit of revenge, *Klinschor* devotes himself to the black arts. He builds a stronghold, the *Châtel Merveil*—*Schateil-Merveil*, as Wolfram writes it—upon a hill, and holds many knights and noble

dames of Christendom prisoners there, among whom are four queens abducted from Artus's court, and four hundred maidens.

In order to snatch these victims from Klinschor's spells and set them free, it is necessary to sleep in a magic bed (lit-merveil), which is in constant motion and beset by all sorts of hidden perils. When Gawan arrives at "Châtel Merveil" he succeeds in leaping upon this bed, where he is immediately assailed from all sides. In the midst of an infernal tumult thousands of arrows are shot at him, followed by a volley of stones. A savage man brandishing a club rushes upon him, and then a lion appears.\* But Gawain undergoes all these trials without trembling, and comes out victorious. From thenceforth the spell which oppressed the prisoners is broken, and all are set free. But Gawan, instead of making his escape and continuing his journey in quest of the Grail, remains at the castle, held by the bonds of profane love. He even invites King Artus to a festival, and the whole Order of the Round Table attends. Then follow banquets and orgies without end. Wolfram does not fail to tell us that Parzival in the meantime pursues his sacred mission all alone, and by

\* The Germanic legend of the youth who could not shiver is easily recognizable in this adventure. The legend is directly connected with the Siegfried myth. Traces of this magic bed still remain in many tales and popular customs of the Germanic, Lorraine, and Walloon countries.

this statement the poet connects these incidents, which would otherwise appear foreign to it, directly with his subject.

Parzival reappears upon the scene at a moment when a joust, in which Gawan will fight, is to take place before the whole court of Artus. The hero arrives, clad in steel armor, and no one recognizes him. Gawan is so sure he is the adversary whom he awaits that a terrific combat takes place between the two friends. Gawan is vanquished by Parzival; he bends his knee and is about to yield when some bystanders shout his name. Hearing this name, Parzival pauses, recognizes his friend, and assists him to rise. The joust is postponed and Parzival brought to Artus's court, where a magnificent entertainment is given in his honor. The king commands that he be reinstated in the Order of the Round Table with due solemnity, but the festivities of the occasion ill accord with the perplexities of his anxious soul. While shouts of joy are echoing through the palace Parzival sadly withdraws, thus furnishing a grand example of renunciation and firmness in the pursuance of his plans.

And now we behold him wandering again in the shadowy forest. Here he encounters a knight, clad in magnificent armor adorned with precious stones, who, without any provocation, attacks Parzival, and a murderous combat ensues. The two knights are of equal valor and strength; it seems that they must be mutually



vanquished. At this moment Parzival invokes the name of God and of his beloved wife, Kundwiramur, then, with a last blow from his sword, so violent that the weapon is shivered to pieces, he fells his adversary to the ground. Both champions are now disarmed; they eye each other, draw nearer, and finally ask a few questions before re-engaging in the strife. Parzival discovers in this way that the man he was about to slay is none other than Feirefiss (*Vair fils*, from “*varius filius*”), Prince of Mauritania, his half-brother, being Gahmuret’s son by a former marriage with a Mohammedan princess. Full of joy at this discovery, the two brothers fall into each other’s arms, and together they set out for Artus’s court.

Hardly have they reached their destination when Kondrie, the sorceress, reappears in the same state as before; but on this occasion she brings a message of peace in the name of the Grail. She publicly announces that Parzival is worthy at last to be a member of the Order of the Round Table. He has been elected the future King of the Grail, and his son Loherangrin (*Lohengrin*) will be his successor. Then, with Kondrie as his guide, and accompanied by his brother, who is still an infidel, Parzival sets forth for Montsalvat, the sacred mountain.

King Pécheur’s sufferings are extreme, and his cries of agony fill the temple. Parzival arrives and anxiety seizes everyone. Will he save him? No one knows

as yet, and the hero himself is trembling violently. "Where is the Grail?" he asks; "I will try whether God's grace will permit me to accomplish the cure." Then, with implicit confidence in the divine mercy, the glorious hero prostrates himself before the sacred relic, and in a long adoration of the Trinity he prays for three hours, the poet tells us. Rising from his devotions, he goes to the king and asks him: "Uncle, what evil causeth thy suffering?" At the same moment Amfortas's countenance brightens, and the poet adds: "He who willed Lazarus to quit his tomb willed now that the king be cured and that he arise from his couch of pain."

Thus Parzival's mission is terminated. Proclaimed King of the Grail, he has Feirefiss baptized, finds his wife, Kundwiramur, and his twin sons, Lohengrin and Kardeiss, who were born after his departure; he summons to his court the good hermit Trevezent, who has helped him so much by his counsels, and reigns long and gloriously over a peaceful Christian world.

Such is this great German poem, which presents a more harmonious ensemble than Chrétien's "*Perceval*," which is, unfortunately, unfinished and marred by interpolations. Notwithstanding the numerous instances of borrowing—which Wolfram, however, acknowledges—from the earlier French poems, notably from Chrétien's and the problematic Kyot's works, the German author's part in the general conception of the work, and

in his method of analyzing and developing the moral side of his hero's character, is too important for his glory to be diminished. His "Parzival," in its warmth and vivacity of style, in its loftiness of thought and its exquisite sentiment, in its animation and the high relief noticeable in the numerous scenes of the romance, and, finally, in the unity which prevails in the whole composition, is in all respects a masterpiece.

Wolfram's German commentators and critics, however, force the note of enthusiasm somewhat in favor of their poet when they would have us believe that Wolfram created the perfected type of a German knight, and that none but a German poet could conceive and produce the ideal of human perfection with such loftiness of thought and depth of sentiment. The scholar Vilmar, for example, tells us that the Breton Peredur and the French Perceval furnished a mere skeleton, which Wolfram subsequently invested with muscles and flesh, causing blood to circulate in its veins and infusing into it the breath of life. Elsewhere he goes so far as to discover that in portraying his hero as a youth of such guilelessness and simplicity that he might almost pass as a fool, Wolfram has closely studied a "natural characteristic peculiar to the Germanic race." While we will not dispute that, as a matter of fact, the German youths are generally distinguished by great simplicity of mind and manner, yet Vilmar's remark, as far as it concerns Wolfram von Eschenbach, is not appro-

priate, for, prior to his writing, Chrétien de Troies had fully developed the type of the ingenuous youth, analyzing this essential trait of Perceval's character with as much accuracy as grace. More than this, however, the figure of Perceval was clearly outlined and developed, even in the ancient Breton ballads, whence Chrétien himself obtained it. Wolfram, therefore, created nothing; he only modified.

Gervinus, another critic, who enjoys a high reputation in Germany, also goes somewhat astray when he explains that Parzival did not ask the momentous question, because he was still completely under the influence of his love for Blanche fleur—Kundwiramur—and, Gervinus adds, having thus retreated within himself (*in sich zurückgescheucht*) his love reverie prevented him seizing the bliss which was offered him. However ingenious this interpretation may be, it seems altogether too subtle. The mediæval poets did not subtilize so much. Their philosophical and moral ideas were much closer to real life. Perceval did not put the necessary question, because he did not comprehend the import of his acts, and because he was so engrossed by the external aspect of things (as is proper at his age) that, ignorant of his latent powers, he was incapable of appreciating the events that transpired before his very eyes. Let us guard against forcing the meaning of these old legends too far, for we thus rob them of that simplicity which constitutes their great poetic charm.

They limit themselves to condensing in their fictitious personages certain traits of character and customs which they have observed in real life, and which are absolutely true. Impulsive candor and activity, combined with unconscious generosity and courage, are distinctive signs of youth in all ages and countries. Superior men, everywhere, have always had a vague presentiment in their young days of a destiny awaiting them. It is not until later that maturity of mind, the fruit of experience and actual observation, furnishes them with correct ideas of the object to be attained and with the conscious force of volition which will bring them to the achievement of that object. Nothing more is to be found in the Breton *Peredur*, in the French *Perceval*, and in the German *Parzival*. Mons. Camille Saint-Saëns, who thinks Siegfried as stupid as a goose, finds *Parzival* even worse ; this undiscerning and pure being, who knows nothing and understands nothing, and yet succeeds in breaking the enchantments in which even saints would have been ensnared, can say nothing to him ; he even asks where the philosophy of it is.\*

This is the reverse of the overstrained exegesis of philologists and æsthetics from beyond the Rhine.†

\* *Harmony and Melody : Introduction.*

† In order to give some idea of the impartiality and knowledge with which histories of literature are generally written, I will cite two examples. In his *History of German Poetry* Mons. Ferdinand Loise, in speaking of *Parzival*, writes as follows : “ What bard or troubadour served Wolfram as a model ? According to

The most curious thing, assuredly, is that the author of this great poem was almost an illiterate man. Wolfram von Eschenbach confessed that he did not know how to write. He composed his poems and dictated them to his secretary. Surely this fact is worth mentioning. It is explained by Wolfram's social status. He was of noble origin and a knight, and as such would have disdained to write, which work was considered vile, and was left to clerks. Knights were only in-

his own statement it was Kyot of Provence ; but was Wolfram familiar with Chrétien de Troies? We do not know, although there are undoubted similarities in the two works." And from this Mons. Loise evolves a long series of reflections upon Wolfram's genius, which he borrows from German commentators. If he had read Chrétien, or even Wolfram, he would probably have known that the latter expressly mentions the French Perceval as one of the sources of his poem, and, moreover, that he often translates it verbatim. On the other hand, Mons. Gaston Paris treats Wolfram's Parzival very cavalierly. He considers it merely "a curious continuation" of Chrétien's poem, "to which," he says, "the German poet composed an immense introduction." To what introduction does he refer? Is he speaking of Titurel? This does indeed relate to the Grail legend, but it forms a large poem by itself. Perhaps he alludes to the three thousand verses in which Wolfram narrates rapidly the story of Gahmuret and Herzeleide, Parzival's parents. I cannot say ; but not only is this introduction not excessively long, it is necessary to a clear understanding of the poem, and, moreover, it is found in the manuscript of Perceval by Chrétien, published by Mons. Potvin. More is not needed to misrepresent the story in its details, and therefore as a whole. (See *History of Poetry : Germany in her National Literature*, by Ferdinand Loise, Corresponding Member of the Belgian Academy ; edited by Merzbach and Falk, Brussels, 1878 ; also, *The Literature of the Middle Ages*, by Gaston Paris, already mentioned.)

structed in the use of arms. There is a picture of Wolfram still extant, where he is represented on horseback, clad in armor, with his helmet on his head, and holding a spear in his right hand and a shield in his left. That is not the usual equipment of a poet, though he be a writer of epics.

Wolfram was born at Eschenbach, near Ansbach, in Franconia; the only date of which we are quite sure is that of his death, in the year 1220, which was found on his tombstone in the cathedral of Ansbach. The greater portion of his life was spent at the court of Landgrave Hermann von Eisenach, who is celebrated in the annals of art and in legend for his love of letters. We are told that Wolfram, together with his friend and associate in poetry as in chivalry, Walter von der Vogelweide, participated in the legendary "Tourney of Song," held in the Wartburg at Eisenach, where his adversaries were the knight Tannhaeuser and the Hungarian poet Klinschor or Klingsor, whose name he subsequently used for the sorcerer in his "Parzival." Besides his epic trilogy "Titurel—Parzival—Loherangrin," we have another great epic poem, "Willehalm" (incomplete), by him, which celebrates the life and exploits of Saint William of Orange, Count of Toulouse, who in 743 stayed the march of the Saracens on the banks of the Orbieu, and founded in 806 the monastery of Gellone, where he died in the odor of sanctity in 812. And finally, we have a series of songs (Lieder) which



he calls Watch-songs (Wächterlieder), a type of poetry which he introduced into Germany, where it remained in vogue for many years. These songs are of the same order as the morning songs of the Provençal troubadours. "Parzival," which is Wolfram's masterpiece, seems also to be the oldest of all his great poems. The date of its composition is unknown, but the poet alludes to it several times in his "Titurel" and in "Willehalm." It is supposed that "Parzival" must have been composed during the early years of the thirteenth century, somewhere between 1201-1210, or about a score of years after Chrétien's "Perceval" was written.

In Germany Wolfram's *Parzival* exerted the same influence that Chrétien's *Perceval* exerted in France, not only upon literature, but also upon morals. During two centuries the chivalry of the Round Table remained one of the most powerful auxiliaries of social progress in Central Europe, and the Grail proved one of the most effective means of Christian propagandism. For a long time the monasteries contested among themselves for the honor of possessing, one the real chalice, another the bloody lance, a third one the sword of St. John; more than one vessel containing Christ's blood was sent from the East as an offering to the Christian kings, and became the safeguard of a whole country, of a whole people. Princes vied with each other in establishing Round Tables, among which were Edward III. in England, Philippe and John de Valois in France,

and the Dukes of Burgundy in Belgium. In Germany knightly orders were innumerable, and several of them exist to this day.

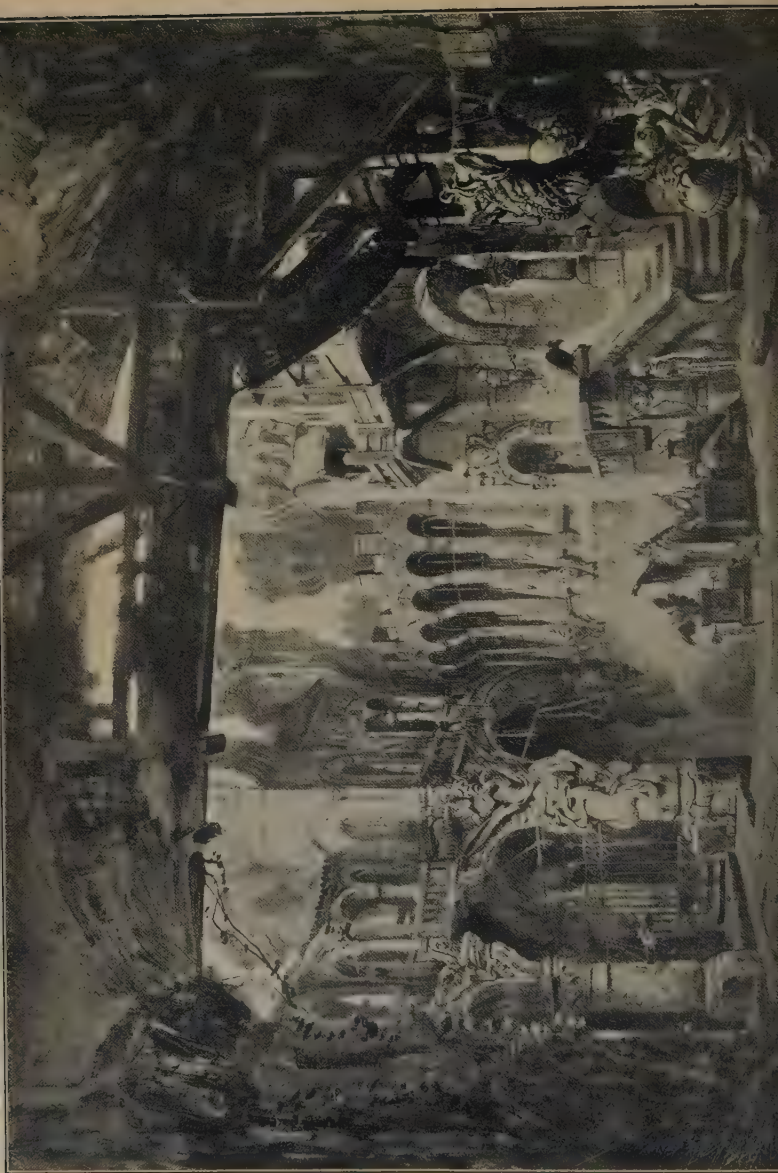
Chivalry, on the whole, has been at one time the power of kings, at another the independence of the barons; it has been the mainstay of the vast structure of feudalism which the people supported. Even upon the battle-fields chivalry conserved the respect for principles which governed its foundation and its first development. Thus, in a memorable combat, when poor peasants in revolt presented themselves armed with huge staves and mattocks, glittering squadrons of knights in iron armor allowed themselves to be slaughtered without defence, rather than to draw the sword against unarmed boors. This is the same scruple that Cervantes ridicules, and which offends Sancho so much, when, beaten by muleteers, he sees himself abandoned by his master, who will not stoop to defend his squire against such assailants. That this caricature of a knightly point of honor is strictly true, is proven by the slaughter of the knights of Hainault.

Thus chivalry has been at once a fiction and a reality. Under all the quaint conceits that fill the epic romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there is a most expressive picture of the moral life of these centuries. Chivalry was a grand mediæval institution, but, simultaneously with feudalism, it altered its nature by degrees. A jolly and bantering spirit replaced the grave

and moral spirit of the primitive institution. The court of Artus is lost in the gardens of Armida, the Grail becomes the enchanted cup of Ariosto, Boccaccio, and La Fontaine.

That is the parody, then follows decadence, and soon oblivion.





## THE DRAMA.

WITH the exception of Alfred Tennyson,\* Richard Wagner is the only modern poet who has been directly inspired by the literature relative to the Grail.

In France the name of Perceval is practically unknown, save as it occurs in the analysis of Chrétien de Troies's poem, given in courses of instruction in history of literature. Victor Hugo, who drew largely from the romances and epics of chivalry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, has not touched upon the Breton material in his "*Legende des Siècles.*" The only French works which may be mentioned as having any connection with this matter are the so-called epics of that prolific poet, Creuze de Lesser, who wrote during the days of the First Empire and of the Restoration, and who attempted to revive the long-forgotten legends of the Round Table, clothing them in the superfine diction of Delille and the troubadour style of the school of poetry which was contemporaneous with Chateaubriand. It is not difficult to understand that these laud-

\* The Poet Laureate of England, who, in his *Idylls of the King*, has reproduced the entire cycle of poems relating to King Arthur.

able attempts have left no trace except in histories of literature.

In Germany, down to Wagner's day, the Grail and Parzival furnished themes for numerous philological and historical works, although seldom inspiring poets of the romantic school, despite their interest in mediæval subjects. Such a phenomenon is rendered more inexplicable from the fact that as early as the beginning of the present century Wolfram von Eschenbach's poem, together with the song of the Nibelungen (*Nibelungenlied*), the Iliad of Germany, has been praised, republished, criticised, and translated into modern language ; in short, rendered accessible to literary minds of all classes, as the masterpiece of the romance poetry of the Middle Ages.

Wagner was the first to attempt an adaptation, or rather a modern transcript of this subject, which, until he took possession of it, had been practically untouched.

What he has made of it we are soon to see. Having striven to give to my readers as comprehensive an idea as possible of the poems by Chrétien de Troies and Wolfram von Eschenbach, I will now take up Wagner's drama, \* thus enabling them to see at a glance just how

\* The following analysis is somewhat long. It follows the action of the drama closely, being indeed, in some parts, a literal translation of it : thus it could serve as a guide to any spectator of the opera. In making my French adaptation, I have had recourse to Madame Judith Gautier's excellent analysis of "*Parsifal*," as it occurs in her short work on Richard Wagner. I have completed



much the master of Baireuth derived from the works of his predecessors, and how much he added that was original.

Wagner has begun his work at the same point in the legend as that from which Chrétien and Wolfram commenced their poems. He assumes that Parsifal was reared by his mother in an isolated country, where she had retired after the death of her husband Gamuret, so that her son might be spared the adventures as well as the cruel fate that befell his father. The child has grown up ; he has constructed a bow and some arrows, and roams singing through the forest. One day he meets here some shining men mounted upon noble steeds. He questions them and is seized by a desire to resemble and follow them. He loses his way in the forest, and from that hour, bow in hand, he wanders through the world. One day this ignorant and simple lad reaches the sacred domain of the Grail, and at this juncture Wagner, disdaining useless preliminaries and assuming the character to be known, begins his drama.

The first scenes initiate us into the dangers which threaten the Grail, and into the trouble brought upon the holy community of its knights. These were caused

and altered this analysis somewhat by inserting several fragments of prose, which I translated for the production of excerpts from the opera in concerts. They have no merit beyond adhering as closely to the original as possible, while being adapted to the music ; they will be found in their proper place in the analysis of the drama.

by the transgression of their chief, King Amfortas, who suffers from an incurable wound in his side because of his sin.

When the curtain rises we see a wooded district of a mountainous country. The scene represents a clearing upon the border of a beautiful lake. Here and there masses of rock may be seen projecting from the tangle of tree-trunks and of wild shrubbery. To the left a road losing itself in the depth of the forest, leads upward to the temple of the Grail. It is morning, and the waters of the lake, visible in the background, are bathed in the intense light of awakening day.

Two squires and a hale old man, wearing the white mantle of the Grail knights, lie stretched in slumber on the sward beneath a tree; the old man is a loyal and pious servant of the Grail, named Gurnemanz (or Gournemanz). In the distance solemn blasts of trumpets sound a reveille. The sleepers, whose duty it is to watch over the sacred forest, start up, ashamed that they have allowed themselves to be overcome by sleep. Gurnemanz chides the young men paternally.

“Up, the hour has come when we must attend the king. Already I behold the heralds advancing before the bed of pain on which he rests!”

And he accosts two knights who are coming down from the castle, and inquires about the king's condition. Amfortas still suffers cruelly from his wound. The balsamic herbs which Gawain has procured from far dis-

tant lands by dint of boldness and dexterity, have been without effect. The agony has grown keener, and, deprived of sleep by intense suffering, the king calls eagerly for his bath.

“Fools that we are,” murmurs Gurnemanz, sadly, “to hope for mitigation where cure alone can give relief.”

Suddenly there appears from the forest a fantasticaly clad female figure. Tawny of skin, with eyes now blazing, now dimmed, her hair wildly dishevelled, her body covered with rags held in place by a girdle of serpent skins, such is Kundry, the sorceress.

She seems to lead a double life. While awake she is in the service of the knights of the Grail, but in sleep she falls into the power of the wizard Klingsor, in whose hands she is a terrible instrument for his work of perdition.

What is she going to do? She brings from afar, from the heart of Arabia, a balm which is to soothe Amfortas's pain. Now appears the cortége of King Pécheur.

“Ah, for a little rest!” is the king's piteous cry to his bearers. “After a night of indescribable anguish I feel the healing freshness of dawn in the forest. The waves of the lake will revive me. Already the pain abates.”

He asks to see Gawain, but Gawain has gone to seek some other remedy that may prove more efficacious than

the last he brought. Sadly the king bows his head. How vain is all searching ! He no longer expects deliverance, save at the hands of the one whose advent has been foretold by the Grail : " A pure being whose simple soul has been rendered knowing through pity." \* For thus has it been foretold by an inscription that appeared round about the Grail in letters of fire. But Amfortas no longer hopes.

" I believe I know this promised Redeemer," he sighs. " Oh, that I might call him Death ! "

Gurnemanz advises him to try yet the balm that Kundry has brought, but Kundry herself sneers at the suggestion.

" Of what use is the balm ? " asks the king. " All is useless ; rather a bath in the waters of the lake."

\* " Durch Mitleid wissend, der reine Thor, harre sein, den ich erkor." Literally translated it reads thus : " Wise through compassion, the pure fool, await him whom I chose." The word fool (Thor) should be taken in the sense in which it was used in the language of the thirteenth century. Chrétien represents Perceval the Welshman also as a fool, *i.e.*, a simple, unsophisticated being. In Wagner's work the mystic promise, given above in German text, is adapted to a highly important musical theme of frequent recurrence in the score, the slow rhythm of which is not susceptible of any modification. Unfortunately, it is impossible to place such heavy words as compassionate or compassion, or such a sonorous word as pity, which lacks the tenderness of the German *Mitleid*, under the music, and it is only approximately that we may endeavor to render the German poet's idea. In lieu of anything better, I propose the following version, which adapts itself perfectly to the music : In the fond soul | Of guileless youth | Rest thy faith | He is my choice.

And at his sign the train resumes its march and is lost in the depth of the forest. The squires, left alone with Gurnemanz, now indulge in maltreating and teasing Kundry, who crouches on the ground like a wild animal, until Gurnemanz reminds them of the law of their order, by which even beasts are held inviolate in the sacred domain of the Grail. Thereupon the young men ply him with questions about Kundry and the king's malady, and in reply he tells them how Amfortas, forgetful of the Grail laws, yielded to temptation. He would fain have fought Klingsor, the magician, who, aspiring to enter the order, and being rejected as unworthy because of his mutilation, had conjured out of the earth the Castle of Perdition, filled with women who enticed the knights into their snares. Armed with the sacred spear, Amfortas had set out and laid siege to the Castle of Perdition. Klingsor sent a woman of irresistible beauty to oppose him, and Amfortas could not withstand her blandishments. While he lay in the fair enchantress's fond embrace, Klingsor had taken possession of the spear and dealt the king a blow, producing an incurable wound. Since that fatal day the sacred lance has remained in the enemy's power. The knights of the Grail are cruelly tried ; hardly are they allowed to taste the mystic bread which nourishes them, and endows them with superhuman strength and virtue, for King Pécheur dares not uncover the sacred cup, the mere sight of which reminds him of his sin and causes

blood to flow from his wound. One day, at last, after an ardent prayer, there appears on the rim of the crystal cup, in which Christ's blood has been received, and which is entrusted to the care of the knights, an inscription in letters of fire. It announces the advent of an innocent and guileless being, to whom compassion shall reveal the mystery of universal human suffering.

This narrative fills the companions of Gurnemanz with holy awe. In a transport of faith they kneel, and, raising their eyes to heaven in supplication, they repeat the mystic promise :

In the loving soul of a guileless one  
Put thy faith, him have I chosen.

Suddenly cries resound from the direction of the lake, and some knights come running in agitation, following with their eyes the uneven flight of a mortally wounded swan that supports itself with difficulty above the water of the lake and soon falls heavily to the earth. Other knights now enter, bringing in their midst a youth of somewhat wild demeanor, clad in skins of beasts and holding a bow and some arrows in his hand. He is the culprit ; it is he who, in the forest of the Grail, where all living things are held sacred, has shot his arrow at a swan and committed a murder that is well-nigh a sacrilege. The knights surround him

and Gurnemanz scolds, but he declares himself ignorant of having committed any crime. Then Gurnemanz lifts up the bird, stained with its blood, and shows the offender the breaking eye of the dying swan. Parsifal—for it is he—is overcome by a hitherto unknown emotion, and breaking his bow and arrows, he flings them from him. They ask him whence he comes, who he is, what name he bears, and who his father is. He knows not how to reply. His name? he has had several, but he no longer remembers them. Whence he comes? he cannot say. His father? he has never known him; he has been reared in the forests by his mother, Herzeleide, but one morning he has gone away and he has not seen her since.

Kundry, who, at a little distance from the rest, has been watching this scene with increasing interest, for she too knows that a savior is to come, now draws near and adds to the youth's insufficient replies. She informs the knights that he who stands before them is the son of Gamuret, who died as a hero in a duel. In order to preserve the boy from a similar fate, his mother reared him in the forest, far from the world, fool that she was! And Kundry sneers.

Parsifal's recollections become clearer. Yes, it was thus: One day, in the woods, he had met men all clad in glittering armor, and he had followed them. Since then, night has fallen and day has dawned many times, while he wandered in the forest, defending himself



against wild beasts and tall men with his bow and arrows.

Kundry corroborates his story. Malefactors and giants dread his strength; they fear the valorous youth.

“Were those who attacked me evil men?” asks Parsifal. “Who then is good?”

“Thy mother,” answers Gurnemanz; “thy mother, whom thou didst abandon, and who now weeps and mourns because of thee.”

Whereat Kundry, with her evil laugh, sneers anew. Parsifal’s lamentations from henceforth will be vain; his mother is dead.

“Dead? My mother? Who says so?” cries Parsifal, pierced to the heart by these tidings.

“As I journeyed that way I saw her die, and she charged me with a last farewell for thee, thou simple fool,” says Kundry.

No longer master of himself, Parsifal throws himself upon her and seizes her by the throat; but the knights interpose, and Gurnemanz adds: “What she says must be true, for Kundry has never lied.”

Parsifal is choked by his tears, his sight grows dim, his pulses fail, and he grows faint from the weight of emotion. All gather about him, and Kundry herself runs to draw fresh water from the nearest spring.

“’Tis well!” exclaims Gurnemanz; “that is what

the law of the Grail requires. He conquers evil who requites it with good."

But Kundry droops her head and sadly confesses :  
"I never do good ; I only seek rest—rest for her who is oppressed. Ah ! to sleep, never to be awakened again by anyone !"

While Gurnemanz and the other knights anxiously surround Parsifal, who is now regaining consciousness, Kundry walks a few steps, to leave the scene, but suddenly she raises her head and cries out : "No ! no ! I do not want to sleep. Horror seizes me ! Vain resistance ! The time is at hand—sleep—sleep it must be !" And she sinks down behind a thicket, where she remains lifeless. The sleep which delivers her to Klingsor's power has come.

Meanwhile, marching is noticed in the direction of the sacred lake ; the king's cortége is ascending to the palace. Gurnemanz, impressed by Parsifal's strange demeanor, and suspecting that he may indeed be that innocent and spotless being sent by the Grail to remove the curse that weighs upon Amfortas, wants to lead him to the temple.

"The king returns from his bath," he says ; "the sun is high in the heavens. Let me conduct thee to our holy feast, for if thou be pure the Grail will nourish thee and quench thy thirst." And throwing his arm paternally around the stripling, he leads him.

"What is the Grail ?" asks Parsifal.

“That may not be told,” replies Gurnemanz. “If thou be really its elect, it will reveal to thee that which thou dost not know.”

The two men walk slowly forward.

Now the scene changes, the forest disappears, and boulders conceal the two wanderers; but they appear again in galleries hewn in the rock. Thus they ascend the steep acclivities that lead to Montsalvat.

Trumpet notes swell softly upon the ear and bells chime, first at a distance, and then apparently nearer and nearer.\* At last Parsifal reaches a vast hall built in the Byzantine style, with circular colonnades and a raised cupola that allows the daylight to stream in like a luminous rain. The Grail knights, wearing their white coat-of-arms, a dove embroidered upon a red mantle, advance gravely in two lines, and group themselves about the two tables where the king of the Grail is going to consecrate the bread and the wine. They sing piously :

For our office holy  
Every day made fit,  
May faith join us solely  
While at love's feast we sit.

\* Here begins the grand scene of the Grail, which figures so frequently on our concert programmes. I have inserted here the prosodical text adapted to the music, which I translated in 1886 for the first performance of this important selection, at the popular concerts in Brussels under the direction of Mr. Joseph Dupont.

Where from the sacred table,  
Revealed to just men,  
The mystery ineffable  
Will be renewed again.

Boys' voices reply from the middle height of the temple :

For a sinful humanity,  
Thus, as in olden days his blood was pour'd.  
Ah, then, upon this day, let my blood be  
Giv'n with cheerfulness for my Lord !  
His death hath been our sure relief ;  
May he live on in our belief.

And children's voices, quite high from the cupola, take  
up the strain :

Faith now revives,  
Lo, from the skies  
Comes a white messenger !  
Take then this wine  
That flows for you,  
And eat the soul's true bread.

Squires and serving brothers then enter, carrying the litter on which King Amfortas lies. Children, bearing a shrine enveloped in a purple cloth, advance toward the centre of the hall and deposit it upon the altar there. The songs cease and a long silence reigns, which is suddenly broken by a voice from beyond the grave, which rises plaintively from a niche at the back of the hall, behind Amfortas's litter. The voice is that of the vener-

able king, Titurel, who rests in his sepulchre, but is revived by the potency of the Grail.

“My son Amfortas!” says the hollow voice, “dost thou perform the Office?” A long silence. “Shall I see the Grail again to-day and live?” The silence is unbroken. “Shall I die without the Saviour’s support?”

The sick king trembles, and, half rising, he cries: “Alas, alas! oh, torture! My father, discharge the sacred Office once again; oh, live and let me die!”

But Titurel’s voice resumes more imperiously: “By the Saviour’s mercy I live, though entombed, but I am too feeble to serve Him. Do thou expiate thy sin in serving Him. Uncover the Grail.” “No! do not uncover it,” cries Amfortas, in an outburst of despair. “Oh, can it be that none among you is able to measure the torment that the sight which transports you awakens in me? What are this wound and the fury of its pangs when compared with my infernal anguish in being condemned to discharge this function! Oh, hapless heritage that has befallen to me, the only sinner among them all, that I must guard the Holy of Holies and implore the divine blessing for them. Oh, punishment, punishment without equal, inflicted by the offended Merciful One. I yearn toward Him and suffer from my desire, but even in my suffering I still desire.”

And thus lamenting, the erring king shows the wound that bleeds upon his side.

“As from the Saviour’s side, from my wound also the blood of the sinner flows, ever renewed by desire, by desire which, alas! no repentance may extinguish. Mercy, Lord, have mercy! Take back my heritage, close my wound! Let me die holy, purified by Thy grace!”

And as the king, exhausted, sinks back, the children’s voices from the cupola repeat the divine promise:

In the loving soul of a guileless one  
Put thy faith: Him have I chosen.

“Such is the revelation,” murmur the knights, in low tones: “Wait in hope and perform the Office once more.”

From the back of the sanctuary Titurel’s voice is now raised for the third time, repeating “Uncover the Grail!”

Pale as death, Amfortas rises silently, the children remove the purple cloth that covers the golden shrine, and from it the king takes the crystal vase, the miraculous Grail.

The knights have bent their knees in devotion, while darkness fills the temple. A single dazzling ray of light falls from above upon the chalice, which grows luminous and glows with a steadily increasing purple light. With his countenance illuminated, Amfortas raises the chalice and turns it slowly to all sides, the voices from above meanwhile singing the sacred words:

“Take this bread, it is my flesh ; take this wine, it is my blood which my love has given thee.”

Then the king puts the Grail down, and the young servants replace it in the tabernacle. By degrees daylight returns, and on the tables before which the knights are kneeling, the cups are seen to be filled with wine, while beside each one is a piece of bread. The knights partake of the feast, and the children's voices from the highest part of the cupola, break forth anew :

The bread of Sacrament,  
By Sovereign Mercy sent,  
The Saviour hath transformed  
Into the blood He shed,  
And His body for us slain.

Then the youths sing in their turn :

Blood and flesh of sacrifice,  
Lo, His goodness ever wise  
For all time hath changed the two,  
To the wine drunk now by you,  
To the bread which now you eat.

And the knights sing :

Take of this bread, that unto us  
Valor and pow'r it may give,  
And that we may be pledged thus  
To worthy deeds, while we live.



Take of this wine, may it infuse  
 Within us warm blood of life,  
 That, joyously, we may not choose  
 But march to the holy strife.

Then all arise and gravely exchange the kiss of peace. Meanwhile Amfortas has fallen back upon his litter, the servants surround him, and he is carried from the hall. The knights withdraw and the temple is emptied, while the voices from the cupola sing for the last time :

Happy in faith,  
 Happy in love.

Parsifal is still standing there, as though rooted to the spot, at the entrance of the temple, where Gurnemanz had left him. However, seeing the king fall back upon his litter, he makes a violent movement, laying his hand upon his heart as if under the stress of intense pain ; but now he stands as one dazed, dumb, and stupefied, without sensation or consciousness, in the silence of the church. The doors are closed, and Gurnemanz returns to him.

“ What ! ” he exclaims, “ art still here ! Dost know what thou hast seen ? ”

Parsifal replies by a negative movement of his head. Thus deceived in his hope and thinking the lad a fool, Gurnemanz now thrusts him out of the temple.

“ Go ! ” he says, gruffly, “ thou art but a simpleton ;

follow thine own way. But Gurnemanz advises thee for the future to leave swans in peace. Gosling, go join the other geese.”

Then in the silence of the sanctuary a mysterious voice repeats \* the divine promise for the last time :

In the loving soul of a guileless one,  
Put thy faith. Him have I chosen.

And the curtain falls.

The second act transports us, by violent contrast, to an entirely different scene, to the Castle of Perdition, where Klingsor practises his magic arts. This act, like the first, consists of two scenes, one of which represents Klingsor's laboratory, and the other his enchanted gardens.

We already know who Klingsor is from Gurnemanz's narrative in the first act.

After a life spent in dissipation in the luxurious land of the Infidels, he had become a hermit, desiring to expiate his sins, and even aspiring to saintship. Finding himself powerless to kill his evil desires, he had laid a criminal hand upon himself, and had then been repulsed with scorn by the Grail knights, unwilling to have this man among them who thought to attain chastity by

\* This repetition, which has a marvellous effect on the stage, is not indicated in the poem of Parsifal, but is found in the musical score. In this instance the musician has rounded out the poet's thought.

self-mutilation. Rage and spite had then taught Klingsor how the horrible crime of his voluntary sacrifice might serve him in acquiring occult sciences and exercising baleful spells. He had given himself up to the black arts and caused the Castle of Perdition to rise from the ground, which castle Amfortas had desired to besiege, but where, succumbing to the seductions of a woman's irresistible beauty, he had allowed the sacred spear to be taken from him.

This woman is none other than Kundry, at once the messenger of the Grail and Klingsor's slave. She has, as it were, two souls, and leads two lives alternating with each other. When awake she is in the service of the Grail; while asleep she is in Klingsor's power, who makes her the instrument of his work of perdition.

Parsifal, whom we have just seen driven by Gurnemanz from the Grail temple, cannot become king of the Grail until he also has passed through the temptation and successfully withstood Klingsor's enchantments. Such, in brief, is the outline of the second act.

When the curtain rises we are in the magician's laboratory at the top of a tower, which is open above. Below everything is in darkness, and at the left there is a sort of black abyss. A series of narrow steps jut out along the walls and ascend to the battlements. On one of these steps Klingsor is seated, surrounded by implements of sorcery and having before him a wizard's metallic mirror. In it, in a magic picture, he beholds

the goodly youth, Parsifal, joyous and heedless, advancing toward the castle, whither he is drawn by a spell.

Klingsor approaches the gulf and throws incense into it, which reappears in bluish vapor. Then, with imposing cabalistic gestures, he begins to conjure up Kundry, who is to seduce Parsifal.

"Ascend from the gulf," he cries; "come to me! Thy master calls thee, thou nameless one, primal fiend, rose of hell! Thou who wert Herodias, and what more! Once Gundryggia, now Kundry; up, up, to thy master; obey him who has sole power over thee!"

Slowly emerging from the darkness, enveloped in a rimy veil, a superb woman appears. Under the evocation she utters a cry of terror, which gradually dies into a feeble moan of distress. She wishes to resist, for she has a horror of herself, knowing for what task the magician awakens her. Klingsor sneers:

"What didst thou do down there among those chaste knights? Art thou not better satisfied with me? After having enslaved the pure guardian of the Grail, what drove thee hence? Ha! ha! was it to atone for the wrong thou didst them? What boots it? The most valiant is in my power. If he fall into thy embrace, he is at the mercy of the lance which I myself snatched from their king. To thy work, then! To-day we have to combat the most dangerous among the knights, him who is protected by his innocence."

Kundry struggles violently: "I will not! Oh, Oh!"

Klingsor: "Thou wilt—because thou must."

Kundry: "Thou canst not keep me."

Klingsor: "But I can seize thee, I, thy master."

Kundry: "Thou! By what power?"

Klingsor: "Because on me alone thy seductions are impotent."

"Ha! ha!" cries Kundry, with a strident laugh. "Art thou then so chaste?"

"What say'st thou, accursed woman?" shrieks the enraged Klingsor. "Oh, cruel torment! Thus Satan mocks me, because once I strove to attain holiness. Oh, cruel torment—torment of ungoverned desire—infernal intensity of instincts which I have forced into the silence of death. Now he jeers at me through thy mouth, thou betrothed of the devil! But beware; scorn and scoffings have been expiated by one at least, by him who once rejected me from the order; by him, strong in the pride of his sanctity, whose descendant is to-day in my power. Soon I myself will be the guardian of the Grail! Ha! ha! he pleased thee, this Amfortas, the hero, whom I gave thee for thy enjoyment!"

"Woe, woe!" wails Kundry, "they were lost with me by my damnation! Oh, sleep, eternal sleep, my sole salvation, how may I attain thee?"

Then Klingsor becomes more insinuating: "He

who resists thee may perhaps deliver thee ; try the experiment upon the youth who approaches.”

Already Kundry protests more feebly.

“ Ah, he is a handsome youth, here he comes,” cries Klingsor from the summit of the tower which he has mounted.

A dangerous smile curves the lips of the enchantress. Without sounds of tumult are heard. Parsifal ascends toward the castle and scales the surrounding wall. Klingsor summons his companions.

“ Ho, ho, guardians, knights, heralds ; up, the enemy approaches ! ”

Klingsor views the ensuing combat from afar. Parsifal strives single-handed but victoriously against all his effeminate foes.

“ Ho, ho, he has no fear, this youth. He has just snatched Ferris’s\* spear and now brandishes it courageously against the horde of his opponents. He breaks the arm of one, the leg of another. Ha, ha, they fall back, they take to flight. How joyful I am ! Would that the whole order of the knights might thus exterminate one another ! Behold him standing proudly victorious upon the ramparts. His cheeks are delicately tinted. With what surprise he looks into the deserted gardens. Hey, Kundry, to thy work ! ”

But already, with a laugh of ecstasy, Kundry has disappeared, and nothing remains but a bluish vapor that

\* The name given in the legend to one of Klingsor’s knights.

hovers over the gulf which has swallowed her. Gradually darkness spreads over the scene.

“Ah, thou tender sprig, whatever destiny was predicted for thee, thou hast now fallen into my power,” exclaims Klingsor, proudly, “and thy purity once stained, thou wilt be mine.”

Slowly the tower sinks down in the midst of an unearthly din, and in its place a marvellous garden arises, filled with tropical vegetation. Farther away appear the terraces and porticoes of a palace in the most sumptuous Arabian style. Quite in the background Parsifal is seen, standing upon the wall, fairly stupefied with surprise in the midst of all these splendors. From all sides, from the palace, and from the different garden paths, ravishing maidens, like living flowers, come rushing, singly or in groups. They are the fair ones who beheld their knights overthrown by this savage intruder. With cries of terror, they run hither and thither. Seeing that Parsifal does them no harm, they are gradually reassured, and approach him; finally they surround him, and with a thousand blandishments and caresses endeavor to please and to seduce him. This entire scene is charming, and may be translated as follows : \*

“Here, here was the tumult !

Weapons, wild exclaimings !

Horror, where is the culprit ?

\* The words, with a few alterations, have been taken from the translation of Wagner's poem by Messrs. H. and F. Corder.—

(Translator's note.)



Up, for vengeance ! they have wounded my lover.  
 Mine, where shall I find him ? All alone I awakened.  
 Where have they fled to ? Oh, where are our lovers ?  
 Alas, O horror ! We saw them all bleeding and wounded.  
 Up, to assist them ! Who can be our foe ? ”

*(They perceive Parsifal and point to him.)*

“ There he stands, behold him. In his hand my Ferris’s sword.  
 He took us by storm. I heard, too, the master’s horn.  
 I recognize my lover’s blood. My knight joined the fray.  
 Woe, they all assailed him, but each encountered repulse.  
 He conquered my lover. He wounded my knight.  
 Still red are his weapons. ’Tis my lover’s foe.  
 Woe, why hast thou caused such distress ?  
 Accurst mayst thou be.”

*(Parsifal leaps to the ground and the damsels start back : he  
 pauses in great surprise.)*

PARSIFAL.

“ Ye lovely maidens, had I not to slay them,  
 When they endeavored to bar my approach to yourselves ? ”

MAIDENS.

“ Didst thou see us, to us didst thou come ? ”

PARSIFAL.

“ Ne’er yet have I seen beings so bright,  
 If I said fair, would it seem right ? ”

MAIDENS.

“ Thou wilt not treat us badly ? ”

PARSIFAL.

“ That would not I.”

MAIDENS.

“And yet thou has distressed us sadly.  
Thou didst our dear playfellows slay.  
Who'll play with us now?”

PARSIFAL.

“I will gladly?”

MAIDENS.

“If thou art kind, then draw nearer.  
Let kindness be accorded, and thou shalt be rewarded.  
For gold we do not play, but only for love's sweet pay.  
Wouldst thou comfort us rightly, thou'lt win it from us lightly.”

*(Several of the maidens have withdrawn to an arbor, and now reappear adorned with flowers. They resemble flowers themselves.)*

FLOWER-DECKED MAIDENS.

*(One after the other, contending for him.)*

“Touch not the stripling, to me he belongs.  
No, no, to me, to me!”

THE OTHER MAIDENS.

“See, the false ones have slyly adorned them!”

*(These maidens withdraw, in turn, and come back decked like the others. They surround Parsifal and cover him with caresses.)*

MAIDENS (together).

“Come, come, O handsome stripling, I'll be thy flower.  
Thy bliss and thy solace shall claim all my loving care.”

PARSIFAL.

*(Standing in their midst in quiet enjoyment.)*

“Your perfume, how sweet! Say, are ye flowers?”

MAIDENS (*singly, then in concert*).

"The garden's pride, we're odorous spirits,  
In spring the master plucked us.  
We here abide, through sunlight and summer,  
To bloom for thee, happy comer !  
Oh, be but kind and true,  
And grudge not the flowers their due.  
If thou wilt not fondle and cherish,  
We quickly must wither and perish.  
Come, come, O handsome stripling !"

## FIRST MAIDEN.

"Upon thy breast let me lie."

## SECOND MAIDEN.

"Let me cool thy warm forehead,  
Oh, let me caress thy fair cheek !"

## THIRD MAIDEN.

"Let me give thee sweet kisses !"

## FOURTH MAIDEN.

"No, here, 'tis I that am fairest."

## FIFTH MAIDEN.

"No, I am the sweeter."

## SIXTH MAIDEN.

"Yet I am still fairer."

## ALL MAIDENS.

"No, I, 't is I !"

PARSIFAL.

*(Gently repelling their eager advances.)*

"Ye wild crowd of beautiful flowers,  
If I am to play, you must widen your bowers."

MAIDENS.

"What, dost thou chide?"

PARSIFAL.

"Because you contend."

MAIDENS.

"We quarrel but for thee."

PARSIFAL.

"That must end."

FIRST MAIDEN.

"Away with you! see, he wants me!

SECOND MAIDEN.

"Me rather."

OTHER MAIDENS *(one after the other.)*

"No, he wants only me."

FIRST MAIDEN.

"Wilt scare me away?"

TOGETHER *(one after the other.)*

"Art with women so wary?  
And of favors so chary?  
The cold trembler, see how he cowers!  
Wouldst see the butterfly wooing the flowers?  
The timid youth!  
How cold, how cold!

The fool, we refuse him, we are wishing to lose him.

We'll let others choose him !

No, no, he belongs to us. To me. And to me !”

PARSIFAL.

*(Half in anger, repulses the maidens, and is about to flee.)*

“Leave me, you shall not catch me !”

*(Suddenly, from a neighboring thicket, rises a voice of marvellous beauty ; it is Kundry's.)*

“Parsifal, stay !”

*(The startled maidens stand motionless, and Parsifal pauses, deeply moved.)*

“Parsifal ?

Thus once called me my mother.”

*(Kundry's voice repeats.)*

“Stay, Parsifal !”

And the flower-maidens, who yield to fear as easily as to pleasure, and wither as quickly as they bloom, now give place to the powerful enchantress. “Thou great fool !” are their parting words to Parsifal, who doubts whether he be awake or dreaming. Then they flee, some sad, some mocking, making the garden re-echo to their silvery laughter.

The thicket whence the voice issued now opens, and Kundry appears, marvellously beautiful, reclining voluptuously upon a couch of flowers.

“Was it thou who called me, me, the nameless one !” says Parsifal to her from afar, though deeply touched.

“It was I that called thee,” she replies. “Thou art *Falparsi*, the simple innocent, *Parsi fal*, the innocent

simpleton. Thus thy father named thee when, dying in far distant Arabia, he sent his last greeting to his son, who lay still within his mother's womb. I have awaited thee here that I might tell thee."

She then relates all that she knows of him, of his childhood, and of his mother, whom he has abandoned and who has died in despair; for Kundry knows his life better than he himself.

"My mother, my mother! What have I done?" he cries. "Thy son gave thee thy death-blow. Insensate wretch that I am! O fool, full of grave faults! That I should have forgotten thee, my tenderly beloved!"

And overcome with grief, he sinks at Kundry's feet. The work of seduction is about to begin. Gently the enchantress folds the boy in her arms, as he remembers and weeps.

"Avowal and repentance will blot out thy fault," she begins, bending toward him; "knowledge will change thy simplicity to reason. Learn to know the love that beset Gamuret when passion for Herzeleide glowed in him. That love which gave thee form and existence, before which innocence and death are put to flight, may it give thee to-day, with the last greeting of maternal benediction, its first kiss."

She bends over him and imprints a long and voluptuous kiss upon his lips.

Thus the throbbings of a woman's heart are insinu-

ated into Parsifal, together with the charm of early recollections and of the tenderest affections. Long does the enchantress press her lips to his, but suddenly he tears himself from this embrace and rises as though under a sudden revelation. With terror in his eyes he lays his hand on his heart, crying: "Amfortas! the wound—the wound! It burns within me too."

Parsifal understands. The veil that wrapped his spirit is torn, and the meaning of all that he has seen breaks upon him. In his own heart he feels the fire enkindled that is eating out that of King Pécheur. Sensuality, the parent of suffering, has revealed to him all the suffering of humanity. "I have seen the wound bleeding," he cries; "now it bleeds within me; there, there! Oh, that moan, that terrible moan! It cries out to me from the very depth of my being. Here—in my heart—here is the flame, the violent, the terrible, the wild desire." He throws himself upon his knees, like a man in desperation, and prays: "Redeemer, Lord; O King of mercy and of pity, how may I expiate my sin?"

From this moment the rôles are reversed. Kundry has risen. From astonishment her feeling changes to one of passionate admiration. She follows the youth's every movement, and tries to seize him once more.

"Proud hero," she exclaims, "fly this illusion. Behold and be gracious when beauty approaches."

But, still kneeling, Parsifal seems lost in a vision



where the whole scene of the seduction to which Amfortas yielded passes before his eyes.

“ Yes, it was indeed this voice that called him, and these eyes that smiled upon him. I recognize them. Thus the tresses of her hair were waving, thus her arm encircled his neck and softly touched his cheek, and thus her lips, pouring out to him tortures, deprived him of his soul’s salvation. Ah, that kiss ! ”

And Parsifal rises quickly, repulsing Kundry with the words : “ Back, thou corruptress ; begone from me forever ! ”

Vainly Kundry multiplies her insinuating caresses and passionate transports, using all the seductiveness of her woman’s voice, now furious with outbursts of anger, again softened in humble supplication.

“ If thou art the saviour, why not unite thyself to me for my salvation ? From all eternity I have awaited thee, the redeemer, who hast tarried so long. Ah, that thou didst know the curse that ever pursues me throughout my existence, sleeping or waking, in torment or in joy, renewing itself continually in fresh torments ! I beheld him, him, and I laughed.\* His gaze fell upon

\* Wagner here recalls the incident in the legend of Herodias, where she laughs as they bring her John the Baptist’s head. This legend adds that the head breathed upon the woman, who, from thenceforth, ‘wandered in mid-air, unable to find rest. This scriptural legend has remained very popular in Germany, but it is mixed with certain elements borrowed from Germanic mythology. Flaubert also recalls it in his marvellous story of Herodias. See the analysis of Kundry’s character in the next chapter.

me, and now, from world to world, I seek to meet him again. In the direst distress I see his look and can feel it fixed upon me ; then the accursed laughter moves me again. When a sinner falls into my arms I laugh, I laugh when I would weep. Ah, I recognize him for whom I have longed so ardently, in thee. Let me weep upon thy breast ; for a single hour only let me be joined to thee ; then God and the world may reproach me, but I will be redeemed and saved by thee."

But Parsifal resists her still. " Should I forget my mission for one single hour, in thy embrace, thou wouldst be lost with me for all eternity. To save thee also I have come. Renounce desire ; to end thy sufferings thou must destroy their source."

But Kundry urges him still more passionately. " My kiss it was that made thee clear-sighted. The enfoldment of my love would make thee divine. If thou art to save the world, if this hour has transformed thee to a god, let me perish eternally for its sake. Only let me love thee, it will be my salvation."

" I shall save thee also," answers Parsifal ; " only show me the lost road that leads to Amfortas."

Beside herself, the woman, thus repulsed, springs up in her fury. " Never, never shalt thou find that road again," she shrieks. " The avenger's curse gives me power ; he protects me even against thee. Oh, fatal mistake ! Take pity on me, and I will show thee the way."











And throwing herself upon him, Kundry seeks to encircle him with her arms, but Parsifal tears himself violently away.

Then, frantic with rage, the enchantress cries :  
“ Help, help, Klingsor ; bar his path ; stay the steps of this insolent man ! ”

At Kundry's outcry the flower-maidens rush in, and Klingsor appears upon the terrace of the palace armed with the sacred spear. With a violent gesture, he hurls the weapon against the audacious one who thus braves his power. But the weapon cannot touch him who has remained pure ; it flies over Parsifal's head, where it seems to remain suspended. Seizing it, Parsifal makes the sign of the cross in the air. Immediately the castle and the garden vanish with a frightful noise. Klingsor disappears in the ground, which opens to receive him ; the flower-maidens droop and fall like withered blossoms, and nothing is seen but an arid desert, in the midst of which Kundry sinks down with a loud cry.

From the ramparts, now in ruins, Parsifal calls in parting : “ Thou knowest where to find me. ”

Then the curtain falls.

The third act, which takes us back to the Grail domains, opens like an idyl of redemption and of peace, after the passionate violence we have just witnessed in the Castle of Perdition.

It is morning, the scene represents the outskirts of a

forest in the midst of the spring landscape, disclosing a meadow in the background, covered with flowers. To the left, at the turn of a foot-path, a primitive thatched hut is built with its back against a rock. There Gurnemanz lives as a hermit, his hair now whitened by age. Having heard a long sigh or moan, which cannot come from a wild animal, he comes out of his hut and goes to the thicket whence the voice has come. He finds here a woman, half-dead and plunged in a lethargic slumber, and recognizes at once Kundry. Raising her from the ground and sprinkling her with water, he revives her, and at last Kundry opens her eyes. But she is unable to speak, and breathes only two words in a low voice :  
“ Serve, serve ! ”

Then slowly she rises and moves toward the hut in a penitent attitude.

“ What a change in her gait ! ” murmurs Gurnemanz, in surprise.

Kundry returns, carrying a pitcher which she wants to fill at a spring that gushes out at the foot of a tree, at the right of the scene.

While she is kneeling to draw the water, she sees someone approaching by a forest path, and by a sign draws Gurnemanz's attention to the new-comer, who is soon close at hand. It is a knight encased in black iron armor, with lowered visor, who bears a spear and shield in his hand. He advances silently and gravely ; his gait indicates sadness. Gurnemanz asks him if he



has lost his way. The stranger, seating himself near the spring, gently shakes his head.

“Thou givest me no greeting,” says Gurnemanz.

The stranger bows.

“If some vow bind thee to silence,” resumes the aged anchorite, in a surly tone, “my duty forces me to tell thee what is seemly in this place. Know that thou art here in a sacred domain, where no one passes through clad in armor and with lowered visor. Dost thou not know what holy day this is?”

The stranger answers by a negative motion.

“What!” exclaims Gurnemanz. “Whence comest thou, in what heathen land hast thou lived, that thou dost not know this is Good Friday?”

At these words the black knight trembles.

“Haste, then,” continues the hermit, “remove thine armor, and do not outrage the Saviour who on this day, deprived of all defence, offered his divine blood for the world’s salvation.”

The stranger obeys. Rising, he plants his spear in the ground, removes his sword and shield, unfastens his armor, and lifting the visor, takes off his casque, then kneels in fervent prayer, his eyes uplifted to the point of the lance.

Immediately Gurnemanz recognizes him as the simple Parsifal, whom he once ejected so roughly from the temple. He also recognizes the sacred lance, and with profound emotion he cries out: “Oh,

blessed day, whereon I had the joy to wake this morn ! ”

Kundry turns away her face.

Rising, Parsifal looks about him, recognizes Gurnemanz, and extends his hand to him affectionately.

“ I am happy to have found thee again,” he says.

“ What, thou knowest me ? Thou recognizest him whom sorrow and distress have bowed so low ? How and whence comest thou to-day ? ” inquires the recluse.

“ I have followed paths of error and of suffering ; may I believe I have left them forever, because I hear once more the murmur of this forest, and have seen thee again, my good old friend ! Or am I lost again ? Everything seems changed to me.”

“ Tell me, whom seekest thou ? ” asks Gurnemanz.

“ I seek him, whose deep moaning I heard one day without understanding it. For his salvation I may at last believe myself chosen,” replies Parsifal. “ But, alas ! a savage curse condemns me never to find the path of redemption, but to wander at random.”

Gurnemanz reassures him, saying that this is indeed the sacred domain of the Grail, and that its knights await him. Ah, they are in sore need of the salvation he brings. Since the day when he entered the temple, the mourning and the woe of the order have increased to real distress. Amfortas, steeling himself against his wound and the sufferings of his soul by a savage obstinacy, covets death. Neither the entreaties nor the sor-

row of his knights can move him to discharge his sacred office. For a long time the Grail has remained in its shrine and the holy sustenance is refused the knights.

“And it is I,” cries Parsifal, “I who caused this woe ! ”

And overcome by remorse and sorrow, he is about to fall, when Gurnemanz supports him and leads him to the spring, aided by Kundry, who in silence has been watching the whole scene from a distance. Gradually Parsifal revives. Kundry kneeling at his feet, gently unfastens his sandals, washes his feet and anoints them with a precious oil ; then, like a second Magdalen, she dries them with her long hair. Parsifal looks at her compassionately, saying impressively : “Thou hast washed my feet, now let my friend anoint my head.”

At this point begins that beautiful scene known as the Good-Friday spell.

Gurnemanz has drawn a little water from the spring, in his hand, and with it he moistens Parsifal's brows ; then taking the precious oil from Kundry's hands he anoints him with it.

GURNEMANZ.

*(Extending his hands above PARSIFAL'S head.)*

Aye, thus it was foretold me.

My blessing on thy head.

Our king indeed behold we,

Thou pure soul !

All-pitying Sufferer, omniscient Rescuer,  
 Thou, who the sinner's sorrows too hast suffered,  
 Assist his soul to cast one burden more.

PARSIFAL.

*(Unperceived, has taken water from the spring, and now sprinkles KUNDRY'S head, as she kneels before him.)*

I first fulfil my office thus.

Be thou baptized and trust in the Redeemer.

*(KUNDRY humbly bows her head. PARSIFAL turns slowly and gazes in ecstasy upon forest and meadow.)*

How fair the fields and meadows seem to-day !

Full many a magic flow'r I've seen

That strove to clasp me in its baneful twinings,

But none have been as sweet as these.

The branches laden with their flow'rs,

Their scent recalls my childhood's days,

And speaks of loving trust to me !

GURNEMANZ.

'Tis the Good-Friday spell, my lord !

PARSIFAL.

Alas, that day of agony !

Now, surely, should not all that blooms,

And breathes, lives, or lives again,

Weep on this day, and sorrow ?

GURNEMANZ.

Thou seest it is not so.

The sad, repentant sinner's tears,

To-day, with holy dew

Refresh the fields anew,

And make them glow with beauty.

All earthly creatures, in delight,  
In their Redeemer's sacred light,  
Uplift their prayers of duty.  
To see Him on His cross, they have no power,  
But they behold redeemed man,  
Who, feeling free, with dread no more doth cower.  
He's freed thro' God's pure sacrifice of love.

And it is known by every blade and flower,  
That mortal foot, to-day, it need not dread ;  
For, as the Lord, in pity, man did spare,  
And in His mercy for him bled,  
So man will have to-day a care,  
That he step with light tread.

Hence all creation now gives thanks,  
With every flow'r that blooms to fade,  
For pardoned nature knows to-day  
Her everlasting peace is made.

Kundry has slowly raised her head, and, with eyes bathed in tears, she gazes at Parsifal in the attitude of a suppliant.

“Thou weepst !” exclaims Parsifal ; “behold how the meadow smiles,” and he kisses her forehead, thus fulfilling the first duty of his mission of redemption.

Meanwhile, bells chime mournfully in the distance.

“Noon-tide ! The hour is come,” says Gurnemanz. “Permit, sire, that thy servant may conduct thee.”

Aided by Kundry, he clothes Parsifal in the tabard

and the mantle of the Grail knights. Solemnly Parsifal grasps the sacred spear, and, preceded by Gurnemanz, he starts on his way to Montsalvat. Kundry follows them.

The landscape changes again as in the first act. The sound of the bells becomes more distinct as the travelers appear to advance. Soon we see them at the entrance of the great hall, which, this time, is in semi-darkness. Long rows of knights in mourning garb, walking two abreast, and repeating solemn chants, precede Amfortas's litter and the coffin in which Titurel lies, for, since the view of the Grail strengthens him no longer, the old king has died.

Parsifal enters, followed by Kundry and Gurnemanz. He sees again the guilty King Amfortas raise himself upon his couch, and, made desperate by suffering, demand death at his companion's hands, while they beseech him to discharge the duties of his office for the last time.

“Woe, woe is me!” he cries, standing before Titurel's open coffin. “My father! pure and blessed hero, to whom, formerly, angels inclined, I, who would have died for thee, have given thee thy death-blow. Oh, thou, who now, in celestial light, gazest upon the Redeemer himself, implore Him, beseech Him, that his blood, if it is again to revive the brotherhood, may grant to me death. Death! To die, that only favor! Let this terrible wound disappear, with its corroding

venom, and let my heart grow cold ! Ah, my father, I call upon thee, present to Him this prayer : ‘ Saviour, give my son peace.’ ”

Still, the knights insist that he uncover the tabernacle. A prey to the most violent despair, Amfortas rushes among them, tearing his garments.

“ No, no, never more ! ” cries he ; “ already I feel death enveloping me in its shades. Insensate men, who of you can force me to live ? Will no one give me death ? Here I am ; here is the bleeding wound ! Behold the blood that poisons me. Lift your arms ; plunge your swords into me—deep, to the hilts ! Kill the criminal at the same time that you kill his torment, and the Grail will then shine for you of itself.”

But the knights fall back, and Amfortas, standing alone in a terrible paroxysm of anguish, begs for death and deliverance.

In the midst of this confusion, Parsifal suddenly advances, his countenance grave but aglow with faith.

“ One weapon only can heal thy wound,” he says ; “ the one that inflicted it.” With the iron point of the lance he touches the fallen king’s wound, saying : “ Be healed, redeemed, and saved, for I now fill thine office. Blessed be thy suffering, which has given the supreme power of compassion and the force of purest wisdom to the timorous innocent one.”

Amfortas, now healed, stands erect in the midst of the profound admiration of all present. During this



time, Parsifal, the new king, ascends the steps of the altar ; the entire assemblage kneel.

“Uncover the tabernacle,” he commands the servants. Then he seizes the crystal vase, which begins to glow with a deeper crimson, and turns it solemnly to all sides above the heads of the assembled. The cupola of the temple becomes illumined with dazzling light, and a white dove hovers above Parsifal’s head.

Amfortas and Gurnemanz prostrate themselves before him, and from the lower steps of the altar Kundry lifts toward him a look of gratitude. But she sinks back slowly, and, touched by Mercy, breathes her last.

From the height of the cupola, mystic voices sing :

Marvel of heavenly mercy !

Redemption to the Redeemer !

Such is—deprived of the expression which is given to it by the flexibility of a singularly refined language, and by the force, combined with conciseness, of profound thought—such is the poem of this drama, to which music lends at once an energy and a sweetness of expression that no words can translate.

## THE GENESIS.

OUR readers will have recognized those episodes of Wagner's drama which were inspired by the tales of Chrétien and of Wolfram. Let us now look closer at the genesis, and penetrate farther into the conception of the modern work, so different from that of the thirteenth century.

Richard Wagner had already touched upon **the** Grail while writing "Lohengrin." Although "Parsifal" is his last work, his first connection with this subject dates back to the time of preparatory studies for the drama of which the Knight of the Swan is the hero. The legend referring to the latter forms, as we have seen, a part of the "Parsifal" by Wolfram von Eschenbach, of which it is, in a manner, the conclusion. It is therefore quite probable that at this time, about 1844-45, Wagner had read the entire romance of the Suabian poet.

Not until much later, however, did he return to it and conceive his project of the drama. It is nevertheless certain that, at that time, Wagner had closely studied the legend of Parsifal, for he speaks of it at some length in a pamphlet, which is evidently the fruit

of his studies on Lohengrin. This pamphlet, which was published only in 1848, is a study on the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibelins (Wiblingen), and is entitled "The Wibelungen, General History from the Legend." In regard to his project, which he soon abandoned, of bringing Frederic Barbarossa on the stage, he reviews in this very interesting work the Scandinavian and German myths, especially the myth of the Nibelungen and their treasure. He establishes their connection with the great events related to the history of the empire of Charlemagne and of the Hohenstaufen. In his last chapter he explains also the myth of the Grail, which, in his eyes, is an Oriental legend, transformed and connected, at least in the German interpretation, with the myth of the Nibelungenhort. Thus he shows how the combats for the possession of the Holy Grail, the source of the highest virtues and chivalric sovereignty, are substituted for the heroic struggles for the possession of the famous *treasure of the Nibelungen*, which, like the Grail, gave invincible courage and supreme power to its possessor. Wagner has often, in his later works, spoken again about this parallelism between the Grail and the Nibelungenhort. He said one day, in regard to Titurel, the founder of the Order of the Grail, whose voice we hear coming from the tomb (final scene of the first act), that this voice was "that of Wotan, in whom the desire to live was broken." In the drama itself, he indicates a

distant, but nevertheless distinct, connection between Kundry and Brunhilde, the daughter of Wotan. He coins for Kundry the name of Gundryggia—from the Scandinavian stem *Gunn*, battle, combat, and *dryggia*, to prepare, to excite—in order to indicate clearly the Walkyrian nature of Kundry.\* Kundry's sleep, from which she awakens without strength, is analogous to that of Brunhilde. Klingsor, who submits to the mutilation of Origen† in order to gain access to the Grail, and who thus becomes the

\* See the Thematische Leitfaden, by Mr. von Wollzogen, for the study of Parsifal, and the article by Mr. J. H. Loeffler, in Bayreuther Blaetter, April, 1878.

† Origen, a scholar in the early Church, born at Alexandria in 185 A.D., died in 253, and was celebrated through his Commentaries on the Scriptures, his translation of the Bible in Greek, and through the rigidity and mysticism of his doctrines. To free himself from all temptation, he had mutilated himself. Singular coincidence: like Klingsor, who is rejected by the Order of the Grail, Origen has always been considered as tainted with error by the Catholic Church. He taught a mystic doctrine analogous to that of the Gnostics, which is the product of the combination of Oriental faiths (Asiatic Bouddhism) with the Jewish and Christian religions. He believed in the pre-existence of souls in a higher region; they could, during their life on earth, purify and elevate themselves to the highest happiness by renouncing the world. It is not impossible that Wagner thought of Origen while composing the type of Klingsor. In his remarkable essay on Parsifal, Mr. Ed. Schuré attributes the invention of the "strange idea" of Klingsor's mutilation to Wagner. We must, however, remember that Wolfram, already, made of the magician Klingsor a *capon*; only in Wolfram's work, Klingsor does not mutilate himself. In Wagner's poem, Klingsor, unable to overcome his desire, mutilates himself to become worthy of the Grail, whose knights must be chaste.

efficient cause of the drama, is evidently conceived after the prototype of Alberich, who curses love in order to take possession of the Rhine-gold. Lastly, Parsifal recalls, by more than one trait, the type of Siegfried. We might follow these analogies without fearing to go too far, since it is certain that, from the first, Wagner regarded the Grail as an idealized treasure of the Nibelungen.

The study on the Guelfs and Ghibelines, of 1848, does not at all forecast "*Parsifal*" of 1881; it only shows the master preoccupied at that moment with the high, moral, and poetic range of his subject.

Not until sixteen years later did the idea ripen in him, and in 1864, the plan of a drama on Parsifal was developed. In the mean time, he had often returned to it during the composition of the "*Nibelungen*," of "*Tristan*," and of the "*Meistersinger*." But, as with the "*Nibelungen*," the work was only very slowly formulated, and very different elements contributed to its completion. As a true creative poet, Wagner did not confine himself to reviving more or less happily the types and characters by Chrétien de Troies and Wolfram; he has drawn from his own heart much more than he has borrowed from his predecessors.

The most important of these elements, foreign to the legend even of Perceval, is a project of a biblical drama, which Wagner formed about 1849, after giving up the drama on Frederic Barbarossa. This drama was to

have Jesus of Nazareth as the central figure. At the time of Wagner's arrival in Zürich, after his banishment from Germany, he speaks of it in a letter to Theodore Uhlig.\* Liszt had advised him to write a work for Paris, and had even held out to him the hope of obtaining an order from the Grand Opera. Wagner was not naïve enough to believe long in the realization of this project; nevertheless, the first work he thought of for Paris was precisely this "Jesus of Nazareth."

"Besides my "Siegfried," † he writes to Uhlig on August 9, 1849, "I have in my mind two tragic and two comic subjects; but not one of them seems to me to be suitable for the French stage. I have just found a fifth one; it is indifferent to me in what language it will appear first; it is "Jesus of Nazareth." I have the intention to offer it to the French and thus to get rid of the whole affair, for I foresee the indignation this project will excite in my collaborator. ‡

The work, as we know, was not followed up, but for

\* Musician in the chapel of the king of Saxony at the time when Wagner was conductor of the orchestra in the Dresden opera-house. After Wagner's banishment a continued correspondence was carried on between Uhlig and Wagner, which lasted until Uhlig's death in 1857. Wagner's letters to Uhlig were published in 1889, by Breitkopf & Haertel, Leipzig.

† He speaks here not of the second part of the Tetralogy, but of Siegfried's Death, the first drama which Wagner wrote on the theme of the Nibelungenlied, and which later, after many changes, became the Goetterdaemmerung. One of the comic subjects of which he speaks here, must be the Meistersinger.

‡ Gustav van Nieuvenhuyzen, called Vaez.

a long time yet Wagner was tormented by the idea of this drama, drawn from the New Testament. He even wrote a large part of the sketch for it, which has been preserved for us. This rough sketch shows that many impressions felt at the moment of the elaboration of "Jesus of Nazareth," passed afterward into "Parsifal." In the second act, Wagner intended to represent Jesus on the shores of lake Gennesaret, with Mary Magdalen kneeling at his feet and kissing the hem of his garment, while she expresses to the Saviour her profound repentance and her purified love. She was to ask him to be admitted as the least of his servants among the followers of Christ. In the fourth act, which was to recall the Holy Communion, Mary Magdalen was to be seen taking from her bosom a cruse of ointment, anointing the head of the Saviour; then, with tears, proceeding to wash his feet. The condensation of these two scenes has become the touching tableau of Good Friday in the third act of "Parsifal."

In her memoirs,\* Mrs. Wille states that in the spring of 1852, Wagner one day, with enthusiasm, expressed to her how beautiful it would be to show on the stage the Prophet of Nazareth as loved by Mary Magdalen. Without going too far into the province of hypotheses, we concede that this is the first idea

\* Wagner *Erinnerungen*, by Mrs. Wille, published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. Mr. and Mrs. Wille, great friends of Wagner, possessed a villa (Mariafeld) near Zürich.

in that scene of the second act where Kundry tries to seduce Parsifal.

Finally, the drama "Jesus of Nazareth" was abandoned. The plan of the "Tetralogy of the Nibelungen," conceived at about the same time, had taken form.

The complete poem had been written rapidly after a long and laborious gestation, crossed by obstacles of all kinds, material as well as moral. Without allowing himself to be disturbed by remote projects of a problematic realization, Wagner devoted himself for three consecutive years to the first three parts of this grand work: "Rheingold," "Die Walküre," and "Siegfried." This last one was two-thirds finished, when the material impossibility of having such a work performed, and the wish to re-enter into communication with the public, perhaps also weariness of the mind after so long and so constant a concentration of thought on the same subject, awakened in him the desire to write a work which should approximate more to the normal conditions of the stage.

It was then—that occurred about 1856—that he conceived the idea of "Tristan and Isolde," the elaboration and composition of which were comparatively rapid. This subject, to which he felt himself suddenly and strongly attracted, led him quite naturally to "Parsifal," for it must be remarked that the old French and German poems connect the legend of Tristan with that of "Perceval." In the first rough sketch of



Tristan, which dates from the year 1855, Wagner remained true to this tradition, only seeking, in accordance with his peculiar mental tendency, to justify, at least morally, the intervention of the Grail knight in a romance wholly of passion, where in reality he was out of place. Wagner had just read Shopenhauer's work for the first time. Deeply imbued with the doctrine of the pessimistic philosopher, he thought to contrast Parsifal, the hero of renunciation, with Tristan, the hero of passion. In the third act, just as Tristan, lying at Isolde's feet, longs for death, yet cannot die, Parsifal appears, in pilgrim's garb, and endeavors to console the lovers, who are lost in a transport of despair.

It seems that, from the beginning, Wagner had given to Parsifal's faith a melody that answered Tristan's moaning in tones of gentle consolation, as the latter sought the *reason* for *living* in the agony of unsatisfied passion.

There was a genuine poetic grandeur in the contrast of these two characters. But the sudden introduction, without any preparation, of the person of Parsifal in this love drama would have been difficult for an audience to accept or to understand. Wagner, foreseeing this danger, suppressed Parsifal in the final poem of "Tristan."

From that time, however, the character assumed shape dramatically, and this first attempt draws us sensibly nearer the work.

Simultaneously with "Tristan," Wagner had jotted

down on paper the sketch of another dramatic project, of which he speaks with enthusiasm in a letter to Liszt, dated July 12, 1876.

He writes: "I have just found two admirable subjects which I certainly must work out some day: the first is "Tristan and Isolde" (you know it already); then comes the triumph, the most sacred of all things, complete redemption; but I cannot tell you now what it is."

This "admirable" subject is none other than that of the Buddhistic drama, "The Victors," the sketch of which, discovered among Wagner's papers, bears the date of May 16, 1856. In this drama, suggested at once by his reading of Schopenhauer and of the Eastern poets, the Parsifal of renunciation, whom we have just seen in "Tristan," reappears under the name of Ananda.

Ananda is the hero who renounces sexual love; he is the ascetic of the Orient, the absolutely pure man. The projected drama was to show us Ananda as passionately beloved by the beautiful Prakriti, the daughter of King Tchandala. The princess, after experiencing the torments of a hopeless passion, renounces love in her turn, and is thus led to complete redemption by entering the order of Buddha, where she is received by Ananda.

Although the sketch of "The Victors" is too inadequate to give us an idea of what might have been the development of the conception, yet it is sufficiently explicit for us to recognize therein a legend that is analo-

gous in many points to the story of Parsifal. Wagner introduces into it, besides Buddha, the Brahmins, and their order, who are not so very far removed from the brotherhood of the Grail knights. Ananda is an absolutely pure being, a stranger to carnal desire, and he acts in regard to Prakriti exactly as Parsifal in regard to Kundry. Up to a certain point, indeed, one may even say that Kundry descends in a direct line from the heroine of the Buddhistic drama. Wagner tells us concerning Prakriti, that she has had a prior existence during which, through haughtiness and pride, she has rejected the love of a Brahmin's son and sneered at the unhappy man. It is this deed that she must expiate in the second life into which she is born, that she may learn renunciation through the virtue of the very one whom she loves and who thus causes her to enter the Buddhistic order.

In one sense this type is connected with Mary Magdalen, whose repentance after her life of lust terminates in her reception among Christ's followers; in the other, Prakriti's two incarnations form the underlying idea of Kundry's character.

Kundry's duality embarrassed the early commentators of Parsifal not a little. They all recognized in this character, who was without either legendary or historic existence, the type of the spirit of sensuality and of perdition, the seducer of all times, the queen of lusts, mysterious like Isis, beautiful like Astarte, the ancient fiend

once called Herodias, the flower of the pit, the rose of hell ; but all were nonplussed by the sort of break in the continuity of her two modes of existence. The fact is that Wagner's poem does not clearly explain, in the first instance, how she lives during the long intervals that separate her life of sin from her life of repentance.

When we turn to the sketch of "The Victors," all this is elucidated. It becomes evident that by expanding the type of Prakriti, and the idea of her twofold incarnations, Wagner in his conception of Kundry has included and condensed, *as in so many incarnations of the same being*, the entire series of phenomena which are associated with the idea of woman. For him woman is a unique type, more or less varied on the surface according to the times and surroundings, but fundamentally identical with herself. It is Goethe's *eternal womanly* realized in concrete form. Her existence, according to Wagner's thought, has neither beginning nor end. Kundry has no individual character, because she is all women at the same time. A sensualist, nothing can equal the violence of her triumphant desires. When her end is accomplished and the man she has seduced is at her feet, she spurns and leaves him with demoniacal laughter. Then she repents, humbles herself, clothes herself wretchedly, wantonly disfigures herself, and even performs deeds of charity ; for she brings the Grail knights balms to heal the wound of Amfortas, which she herself has caused. Yet all this is but a partial repent-

ance, because the woman will never *renounce*. Death itself to her is not a deliverance, an end ; it is a lethargic slumber, from which she will awake to resume her life of lust and of seduction. One woman is the continuation of the other.

Such is the idea reduced to its simplest form of expression. Wagner formulated it very clearly in two words which occur in the scene of the first act, where Gurnemanz reproves the two youths for having ill-treated Kundry : “ Perhaps,” he tells them, “ she lives now a *new* life, that she may expiate the sin of a *former* life which was then not forgiven : Hier lebt sie heut, vielleicht erneut, zu büßen Schuld aus frühern Leben, die dorten ihr noch nicht vergeben.”

And farther on the same idea is found expressed as clearly in the very striking scene of Kundry’s evocation by Klingsor. As the magician summons the enchantress and shows her an attractive victim in the form of a virgin youth, he thus apostrophizes her :

“ Up, up, from the abyss. Come to me ; thy master calls thee, thou nameless one, primal fiend, rose of hell ! Thou who wert Herodias and what more ! Once Gundryggia, now Kundry, come to me ! ”

Kundry is nameless, for the very reason that she is impersonal. To the magician, who knows the past, the present, and the future, she is Kundry only temporarily. To-morrow she will be another woman, while still remaining the same, as she was in former times. The

names of Herodias and of Gundryggia sum up, in his thought, a whole series of legends about woman, this dissolvent though necessary element in the world. A German legend relates that Herodias, passionately in love with St. John the Baptist, wished to kiss the saint's lips when, after his execution, his head was brought to Herod in a charger. But the head drew back and breathed violently upon Herodias. Since that time Herodias, lifted from the earth, wanders about as a phantom in mid-air, never able to rest on the bushes, save from midnight to the first crowing of the cock. This Christian legend is an adaptation of the Scandinavian saga of Freya, who, abandoned by her husband Odhur, sheds golden tears at night, and is continually pursued by Odhin, the god of the tempests. The legend itself is transformed later and becomes the infernal chase, the nocturnal chase of restless and sinful souls, of vampires, at whose head is seen Herodias, and in which we recognize a derivation from the myth of the Walkyries. We see by what association of ideas Wagner connected the name of Herodias with the name Gundryggia, which he coined to indicate one of the "migrations," that is to say, one of the incarnations, of Kundry.

The name changes, the essence remains. Thus the character of Kundry, which is apparently so contradictory and enigmatical, may be explained as a symbolic figure of woman, of eternal woman, who lives on for-

ever, at once terrible and sorrowful, for the happiness and the anguish of all creatures.

“Jesus of Nazareth” and “The Victors” may be regarded as the preparatory studies for “Parsifal.” This point once reached, the final elaboration of the drama was only a question of time. Some favorable circumstance was needed to bring it to perfection, and this circumstance was not long in coming.

For a long time Wagner had longed ardently to possess a small estate where he would be sheltered from noise and intruders. In the summer of 1856 he wrote the following despairing letter from Mornex, near Geneva: “I am consuming myself, and moreover will soon be incapable for work, if I do not find such a dwelling as I need—a small house with a garden, far from all noise, and above all from all pianos; for, whichever way I turn, even here, I am pursued by the racket of these cursed instruments. This unnerves me to such an extent that the mere thought of the proximity of a piano will take from me all desire to work. During four years I have vainly sought this much desired retreat.”

A happy chance, the generosity of devoted friends, was to procure the fulfilment of his wish no later than the next year. In the spring of 1857, near Easter, Mr. and Mrs. Wesendonck placed at his disposal a small estate which they owned in the village of Enge, near Zürich, and not far from their own villa. Here Wagner



installed himself during the first days of April, and here, on Good Friday, in an hour of deep poetic revery, he recalled Parsifal and the touching incident, related by Chrétien and Wolfram, of his encounter with the pilgrims on Good Friday. On that day, as he himself said later, he heard the sigh of profoundest pity that once was heard from the cross on Golgotha, and which now escaped his own breast. In a few hours he wrote those tender and touching verses which he afterward put in Gurnemanz's mouth, and which explain the spell of Good Friday, that day of universal repentance and pardon, when nature seems more beautiful, when flowers and herbs, watered by the tears of repentant sinners, that holy dew, uplift their heads, and when every creature longs for the Redeemer and trembles with joy before purified man.

At this moment "Parsifal" was conceived. A few days later Wagner rapidly sketched a drama, the central idea of which was pity, and the chief figure Parsifal, who had become both the hero of *renunciation* and of *compassion*.

According to Mr. H. S. Chamberlain, this sketch contained not only some important scenes of the final drama, but also fragments of musical motives. It is further to be noted that this sketch antedates the completion of the poem of "Tristan," for on the 25th of August, 1857, Wagner declared to some friends that he did not know, as yet, how he would write the third



act of "Tristan," whence Parsifal, having become the hero of a new drama, had been eliminated. Consequently he had to find another denouement.

When the sketch of "Parsifal" was finished, Wagner returned to "Siegfried," and finished the second act. Then he resumed the plan of "Tristan," devoting himself to it exclusively for almost two years, or until 1859. Then came unproductive years, which extended from the autumn of 1859 to the summer of 1864, including the years of "Tannhäuser" in Paris, of projects for the performance of "Tristan" in Vienna, Carlsruhe, and Stuttgart, which were not realized, then concert tours in Russia, and finally his residence in Vevey and Vienna, which reduced the master to such a state of destitution that he was forced to flee from Vienna to escape his creditors. A wonderful, a providential chance; if you will, put at this time the king of Bavaria in his path.

The enthusiastic admiration which Louis II. had long cherished for the author and composer of "Lohengrin," and how he sheltered Wagner from all care, are well-known facts.

It was at the youthful monarch's request, as Wagner has since formally acknowledged, that near the close of the year 1864, he resumed the "Parsifal" sketch which he had hurriedly put on paper while at Zürich, and that he fully arranged the final plan of the drama.

This plan seems to have been greatly developed. At frequent intervals Wagner gave readings of it to his

friends, notably at an evening party of intimate friends, arranged by Hans von Bülow in Munich, on January 14, 1865. On the 26th of the following September, he wrote to his old friend, Madame Wille: "My ardor for work absorbs all my strength. I am going to complete the 'Nibelungen' (which has been interrupted since 1857); a 'Parsifal' has also been sketched."

This sketch, which undoubtedly served for the final poem, was begun immediately after the famous performances of the "Ring of the Nibelungen," at the Bayreuth theatre, in 1876, but it has not been preserved—at least it has not been published, as yet. Mr. von Wolzogen, whose interesting pamphlets upon the master's last compositions are well known, affirms that there was a scene in this sketch which recalled the charming incident found in Chrétien's poem, and reproduced by Wolfram, where Parsifal loses himself in a profound reverie as he sees upon the snow the three drops of blood shed by the wounded crow. This incident was eliminated from the composition of the poem, but the scene where Parsifal appears pursuing and wounding a swan is evidently a reminiscence of it.

After all that has been said, it is superfluous to add that Wagner's "Parsifal," although in the main inspired by Chrétien's and Wolfram's poems, still differs from them very materially. The ingenuous conceits of the poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have become a thoroughly modern work of keen psychology and

lofty philosophy. It may even be said that Wagner's conception opens a deeper and an entirely new view of the old legend to our eyes. The somewhat confused adventures among which the character of the principal personage is developed and laboriously represented, seem to have become accessories, whence a moral type now emerges into greater clearness and relief. Mediæval poetry could express this type only imperfectly, being too much absorbed by the social and religious purposes of the work, and moreover, impelled, by the spirit of the times to give an undue importance, at least according to our present point of view, to the delineation of the ephemeral customs, tendencies, and aspirations of that epoch.

In the main, Perceval and Parsifal are the same unconscious being, the same pure, frank soul, who does not attain to the full possession of himself save through the sorrowful experiences of life. Only, between Chrétien's hero and that of Wagner, there is all the distance that separates the nineteenth century from the twelfth, both morally and historically. Although coming immediately after Chrétien de Troies, Wolfram von Eschenbach—in this he was indeed of the race that was to produce Kant—had already added a feature to the moral character of the French Perceval, that rendered him, to a certain degree, more Germanic.

The point about which Wolfram's whole poem turns is doubt :

Ist zwivel herzen nachgebur  
Das muoz der zele wurden sîn.

“Doubt is near neighbor to the heart and causeth the soul to suffer,” he says ; and his work has no other philosophic import than to show how Parsifal overcomes this doubt, by the firmness with which he pursues his object, which is to become a perfect knight—notwithstanding his hesitancy of spirit and his uncertain resolutions. This was indeed the conception of a poet who wrote during a time when the Church and chivalry represented moral and social order in its fullest expression, and when doubt with regard to the truths proclaimed by the Church was considered *the absolute crime*.

Wagner's moral theme is entirely different. His hero is not a spirit preyed upon by religious doubt, nor is he a kind of twelfth century Faust. Parsifal knows nothing of doubt. He enters into the world, or rather into the drama, without any care about beliefs ; on the other hand, everything with him is turned toward the emotional life. He is a pure and simple child soul who enters upon existence with only the knowledge of his youthful strength and the impetuosity of his desires. He knows nothing, at first, of the world of emotions that are latent in him, but is disposed, by his very sincerity and purity, to respond all the more quickly to the first appeal for pity. Wagner shows us this soul becoming

enlightened by degrees, being developed by the experience of sad realities, rising by sympathy with all sorrow, to the most purely human emotion which philosophies and religions have professed : *compassionate pity*.

Such is the fundamental idea. What Wagner has borrowed from the old legend has thus been brought nearer to us, for it deserves remark that this idea of *pity*, of which "Parsifal" is the highest glorification in modern poetry, enters into all literature of this century, and is interpreted by the most widely different poets in the same way as Wagner has done. All Victor Hugo's works (to cite no one else) are imbued with this idea, and never has this poet been more lofty, more eloquent, more persuasive than when hurling anathemas at anger and hatred, when interceding for the lowly, or when invoking the sweet image of Pity among great events of the present or the past.

Nor is this true in literature alone ; in manners, in social relations, even in political life, one and the same universal movement has impelled all minds, during the entire first half of this century, toward a sort of general pacification. Secular discords between peoples have been suddenly extinguished ; class hatred has disappeared ; with generous enthusiasm the greatest minds have given themselves wholly to the research after some amelioration of social incompatibilities ; war itself has become more humane ; in brief, it is as though an inspiration of charity had passed over the old world and

had, for a moment at least, brought us suddenly in touch with the ideal of primitive Christianity, which proclaimed the equality of man in the face of the pagan world, and instituted the law of love and pardon.

“Parsifal” is nothing else than a magnificent hymn of this lofty sentiment.

Wagner has frequently been censured for choosing subjects that went beyond the habits of mind of the public and deviated from the general tendencies of the times. This censure, besides being of trifling consequence, is unfounded. “Parsifal,” which by its mystic character is a conception apparently far removed from actuality, is really of all modern works the most deeply impregnated with the spirit of the century. It must not be believed that, by borrowing the majority of his subjects from the Middle Ages, Wagner yielded to a philological or archaeological predilection. Naturally, he studied his sources and knew all that philology or the historic sciences had gathered and reconstructed concerning the ideas, the customs, the manners, and the modes of life during the twelfth century. He only employed this knowledge, however, to give his characters the features and bearing of an age distant enough to appear mythical, and thus, by recoil, to create an atmosphere about the action that would elevate it above strict realism.

In this same spirit he took up the devices of the ancient legend : the Grail and its knighthood, the bleeding lance, and the enchantments of the magician Kling-

sor. The author does not even tell us what is his individual opinion with regard to these superstitions of another age. He merely reproduces them, as so many symbols, with the meaning given them by the Middle Ages, and without attaching any other importance to them. They had no special significance in his eyes, and interested him no further than as they were expressive and appropriate means for portraying the moral idea and the philosophic synthesis of the subject in stronger relief. The popular productions of imagination and poetry have, in this respect, a most extraordinary power of suggestion. Accordingly, Wagner treasures them with great care, as well-known graphic signs.

For the rest, the primitive legend underwent important modifications ; it may even be said to be completely transformed by the new purpose for which Wagner made the ancient symbols serve ; it is certain, for instance, that there is a strongly marked tendency to pity and compassion in Chrétien's *Perceval* ; but how much larger is the idea about which the Wagnerian drama is evolved, and how distinctly it dominates the entire work ! Chrétien's, or Wolfram's, pity does not preclude any deeds of violence ; it even glories in all the feats of strength that were permitted by the condition of customs and the needs of society at that time. The Mediæval type is, in a measure, double-faced. *Perceval*, the Welshman, weeps over the death of his mother, defends woman's virtue, and is moved by King Pécheur's an-



guish and wound. The story of Christ's death draws tears from his eyes, and he humbles himself piously before the holy hermits ; but he cuts down without any scruples all adversaries who resist him, and is void of pity for all miscreants. He is humane in accordance with the Catholic view of the subject : in the heart that she had disciplined, religion has only permitted the love of blood and the desire for conflict to remain of all the old ideas of heroism.

Parsifal rises above this far too orthodox conception. His compassion is universal ; it extends to all creatures moral as well as physical help. It is the pure human sentiment freed from all narrowness and from all ecclesiastical admixture. Through this, Parsifal becomes a very different figure from Perceval, although one is evidently derived from the other. To the primitive type Wagner added a number of traits that are characteristic of himself, and that could not be conceived of apart from his personality. It would be superfluous to insist upon this point now, after having given all the genesis of the work and shown that it is composed of many elements, gathered from every side, but all converging into the same end in view. Nevertheless, it will not be useless to recall one trait of character, peculiar to Wagner, that struck all who knew him ; I speak of his extreme sensitiveness. Count Gobineau said of him : " He can never be perfectly happy, because he will always have about him someone whose pain he must



share." Madame Judith Gautier tells the pathetic story of an injured dog which he picked up from the highway, and upon which he lavished a quasi paternal care.\* His campaign against vivisection, which he considered a useless martyrdom inflicted upon beasts, is well known.† Everywhere in his letters to his friends, Liszt, Uhlig, and Heine, he manifests an extraordinary pity for animals, and a horror with which "man's frightful insensibility" inspires him. The volume of sketches, thoughts, and fragments,‡ published after his death, abounds with sentences upon compassion, particularly for beasts. This is a trait which he had also in common with Schopenhauer. We know that the philosopher of Frankfort also protested most furiously against the abuse of vivisection. "One must be either totally blind," he writes, "or else stupefied by the 'stench of Judaism,' not to see that an animal is essentially the same thing as we are, and that he only differs from us by accident." His dog

\* "The composition of *Die Meistersinger* was interrupted for many months by the deed of a miserable, sick stray dog that Wagner, then in Zürich, had picked up and endeavored to cure. The animal bit him severely in his right hand, and the wound became so painful that it prevented him from writing at all."—Richard Wagner and his Poetic Work, by J. Gautier. Paris, Charavay frères, 1882.

† See the open letter which he addressed to Mr. Ernest von Weber, the author of an anti-vivisectionist pamphlet, entitled, *The Torture—Chambers of Science*.—*Bayreuther Blätter*, October, 1879.

‡ Posthumous Works, Vol. I. Breitkopf & Haertel, Leipzig, 1884.

was a real person to him. Schopenhauer beheld in him an emblem of fidelity, and he mentioned him in his last will. This was like what Wagner did when he had his dog interred beside the tomb which he intended for himself, in the park of his villa of Wahnfried, and had a monumental tablet placed over it, bearing this inscription: "Here Russ rests and waits." This was no imitation, however, because long before he knew Schopenhauer's philosophy, Wagner had expressed, in letters to his friends, sentiments and ideas that were analogous, if not identical, with those of Schopenhauer. Briefly, then, he himself was the compassionate being he wished the hero of his work to be. Parsifal may be called an idealized reflection of him. This is why Wagner, in his final poem, sings of compassionate pity, such as he had in his own nature, and sings of it with such profound sincerity, with such persuasive eloquence, as the loftiest sentiment of the human heart, the highest power, and the purest science.

After this it is superfluous to declare that "Parsifal" is not a glorification of a religious dogma. This intention was commonly attributed to Wagner when "Parsifal" first appeared. His conversion to Catholicism, brought about by Liszt, was the theme of conversation. The German commentators particularly indulged in a profusion of views upon this subject, several of which are more ludicrous than one would suppose. Some men went so far as to make Wagner the apostle and founder

of a new religion, to which they gave the name of Neo-christianism, and which, not less cruel than Catholicism, led to the savage campaign against Judaism, the deplorable consequences of which have been seen in different countries. In the camp of the opposing faction Wagner was held responsible for this explosion of hatred against the Jews. Though he is not altogether a stranger to this movement, it is nevertheless important to affirm that the responsibility for this antisemitic outburst dates back, in the first place, to Schopenhauer and his disciples, and in the second place, and above all, to the gross and narrow fanaticism of certain Protestant preachers, who were as intolerant in their clericality as the most fanatical of the Catholics. Wagner never mingled with this sect. Theoretically, and above all, artistically, he sometimes combated the spirit and tendency of Judaism most vigorously; but his respect for liberty of thought and for every individual's right to live, always prevented him from putting into practice the doctrines which he only affirmed on principle.

As to his religious sentiments, they would be most difficult to define and classify. Undoubtedly Wagner, like all great artists, possessed a profoundly religious, that is to say, a believing, soul. But his faith never fastened itself to a dogma. If Wagner had a religion, it was of an entirely personal, philosophical, and simply metaphysical nature, without any connection with any orthodoxy whatever. It is true that from the ensemble

of "Parsifal" there rises something like the perfume of incense, and a most pronounced sensation of mysticism, called forth by the solemn character of the grand scenes of the drama, which were incontestably inspired by the mysteries and offices of the Romish Church; but this is rather an exterior or superficial effect, if we may call it thus. Wagner never wished either to parody or to renew, on the stage, the ceremonies of any actual religion. His thought was altogether too lofty and too general. The very universality of his opinions in religious matters excluded all narrow tendency toward a system bound by dogma and observances. He was as far removed from the more mundane than philosophic mysticism that inspired so many of the works of others of his contemporaries, than from the sincerely religious mysticism of the great writers of the Catholic Church. This can be explained, not only by the peculiar tendencies of his mind, but also by the widely different elements that were mingled and blended in his conception of religious thought.

Reared in the stern sphere of Protestant orthodoxy,\* and, later, brought in contact with the somewhat theatrical splendor of the Catholic Church in Dresden,† he subsequently came under the influence of

\* He was educated in St. Thomas's School, at Leipzig.

† The kings of Saxony, although sovereigns of an essentially Protestant country, are Catholics, and it is well known that the religious ceremonies at the court church are very brilliant.

the humanitarian religious ideas of the philosophers of Kant's, of Hegel's, and of Feuerbach's \* school, especially of the latter, who was his friend. His reading of the Oriental poets and philosophers led him finally to the pure speculations of pantheism and of Buddhism, the doctrines of which he had adopted long before he discovered their philosophic formula in Schopenhauer's writings.

If you would be accurately informed as to Wagner's real sentiments on the subject of religion, open his correspondence with Liszt. The latter had received his philosophic training in another school, in that of Lamennais, George Sand, Montalembert, and Lacordaire. He always had very strong inclinations to religion, and while still very young he wished to take orders. Even at the height of his career as virtuoso, full and exciting as it was, he had frequent returns to the mystic ideas of his early youth, and finally, as we know, received the minor orders in Rome. The sincerity of his convictions and aspirations on this point cannot be suspected: his religious sentiments were not at all affected, and they come to light in his letters to Wagner, who was not even a theist. Especially at the end of his stay in Weimar, from 1854 to 1860, Liszt frequently broached

\* Feuerbach, one of Hegel's disciples, although possessing a much more radical mind, was a sort of German Proudhon, whose writings seem to have had great influence upon Wagner's youth. They doubtlessly determined Wagner to take part in the Revolution of 1848.

this subject in his confidences to his friend. To one of Wagner's despairing letters he replied in these terms : " Let me convert you to faith—there is a happiness, and it is the only true and eternal happiness. Scoff at this sentiment as much as you please, I shall not cease to see in it, and hope from it, salvation. *Through Christ, through the resigned suffering in God*, will come to us salvation and deliverance."

Wagner remained absolutely indifferent to these suggestions, and far from acting upon them, he sought, in his turn, to convert Liszt to Schopenhauer's philosophy, who was " the greatest philosopher since Kant," he tells him in a letter dated 1854.

" His main idea of the final annihilation of the Will to live is terribly severe, but salutary and grand. This thought," adds Wagner, " is not new to me ; but no one can comprehend it who has not carried it already in his own mind." Then he grows animated upon the subject, and unfolds to Liszt, at length, the beauties of the philosopher's moral theory, asserting that Schopenhauer's work had been " a gift dropped from heaven " into his solitude.

Later, in a letter dated from London in June, 1855, he explains his views in detail upon the subject of Christianity, à propos of Liszt's plan of writing a symphonic poem upon the conception of Dante's " Divine Comedy." He declares very clearly in his letter that, philosophically, the great Italian's work could not sat-

isfy him, for it appeared to him to have but a single object, which was to demonstrate, according to the Catholic doctrine, the existence of a God "who, for His own glorification, has created the hell of this life, and has imposed its sufferings upon me without, however, rendering His existence, which my conscience repudiates, less problematic."

"The problem to solve in this matter," he continues, "has always been to set up a God, in view of this frightful world, beyond which there is nothing; a God who will make the atrocious sorrows of existence seem illusory to us, and who, on the other hand, will let the joys of a greatly desired redemption appear very real and susceptible of being consciously enjoyed. This may be excellent for the Philistine, especially for the English Philistine. He is on excellent terms with his God, he enters into a sort of compact with him, by which, in return for the performance of a certain number of specified conditions, he receives eternal bliss in heaven as a compensation for an equal number of failures in this lower world. What have we in common with these vulgar fancies?"

Then he reveals to Liszt the basis of his views upon human nature and Divinity. It is a curious statement, and deserves to be cited in its entirety. One day Liszt had expressed himself on this subject, adapting to his own use the trite definition of man, who "is an intelligence served by organs." Wagner does



not accept this definition, "for the majority of men," says he, "possess only organs and little or no intelligence," at least in the sense that Liszt used the word.

"I understand this subject very differently," he writes, "namely: Man, like every other animal, is a *Will to live*, which 'Will' creates its own organs, in accordance with its needs, and among its organs it develops intellect, *i.e.*, an organ capable of conceiving the external world, in order that this external world may serve to satisfy the desire of life. A *normal* man, consequently, is he in whom this organ, directed to external things (whose function is to perceive, just as the function of the stomach is to digest), possesses the necessary force to procure satisfaction for the desire to live. This vital instinct—in the normal man—is nothing else than the desire for nourishment and propagation. For this 'Will to live,' which is the fundamental and metaphysical cause of existence, has no other aim than to live, that is to nourish and reproduce itself eternally. This tendency is inherent in the coarse stone and in the most delicate plant as well as in the human animal, only the organs of the 'Will' are different, according to its development to a higher degree of objectivity, and it must, in consequence, furnish satisfaction to a constantly increasing number of needs that are more and more difficult to satisfy."

This conception, it must be admitted, has nothing



mystic or religious about it; it is the pure doctrine of Schopenhauer.

The conclusions to which these premises led Wagner are extremely curious.

In his opinion, this special organ, called the intellect, does not even develop sufficiently in the majority of mankind to satisfy their desire to live. In certain individuals, on the other hand, it develops in so excessive a manner that, temporarily at least, they free themselves from the thralldom of the "Will to live" and attain the contemplation of external things without "Will," that is, æsthetically.

"These external objects beheld thus, without 'Will,' " he declares, "are the ideals of life, to the preservation and reproduction of which the artist consecrates himself. In vigorous natures, the emotion aroused by the spectacle of the external world can reach a prolonged forgetfulness of the peculiar, original, and personal needs of the 'Will,' attaining to a sympathy (compassion) for external objects, and also for themselves, without any hidden thought of personal interest. The question is to know what it is that we contemplate in this abnormal state, and whether our sympathy is *sympathy in joy* or *sympathy in suffering*.

"Men of true genius and sanctity, in all ages, have given us the answer to this question by saying that they have seen nothing but suffering everywhere, and have experienced only *sympathy in suffering*. This was because

they recognized the *normal* condition of every living being as well as the frightful and eternally contradictory character of the 'Will to live,' which is common to all living creatures, and which feeds upon itself while blindly desiring itself alone.

"The terrible cruelty of this 'Will,' that sees only its own reproduction in sexual love, has thus found itself reflected in the very organ of perception, which, normally, is under the control of that same 'Will' through the organ (the intellect) which it has created for itself; so that in the abnormal and sympathetic state the intellect seeks to free itself forever from this servitude by *willing* complete annihilation of the 'Will to live.' In essence, this negation of 'Will' is the peculiar act of saints; the first Christian saints, as yet too ingenuous and too much under the influence of Jewish dogma, could fail to see that this negation, in order to be complete, must end in the total annihilation of the consciousness of self—there is no other than a personal and individual consciousness. Their limited imaginations could look upon the redeemed state as an eternal continuation of life renewed apart from natural laws. We may not permit ourselves to be deceived as to the moral import of their renunciation. In reality, they aspired to nothing else than the annihilation of their personal individuality, in other words, of their being.

"This profound aspiration is found in a purer and more significant form in the oldest and holiest of human

religions, in the doctrine of the Brahmins, particularly in that of Buddha, which is the fullest and most sublime expression of it. This also, it is true, begins with the myth of the creation of the world by God; only in this act of the Divinity it does not see a blessing, but a sin of Brahma; a sin which he expiates by transforming himself into this world, whose atrocious sufferings he endures as a punishment; a sin which is atoned also in the saints with the complete negation of the 'Will to Live,' thoroughly imbued as they are with sympathy toward everything that suffers; by which sympathy they enter the state of Nirvana, or the realm of not-being. Buddha was one of these saints. According to his doctrine of the migration of souls, every living being must be re-incarnated in the form of another being, to whom, however pure his life may have been, he has caused pain. He has now to experience this pain himself, and this sorrowful migration must not cease, he must continue his re-incarnations until he has completed a whole course of his new-born life without inflicting pain upon anything, but denying through sympathy with other beings his personal 'Will to Live.' "

All this is borrowed from Schopenhauer's ethics, which are in turn derived from the philosophies of India. Wagner adds, with justifiable enthusiasm:

"How much more lofty and satisfying is this theory than the Christian-Judaical dogma, according to which it is enough that man—the animal that suffers has natur-

ally been destined to serve him—during his brief life show himself docile to the teachings of the Church, that he may subsequently lead a most agreeable existence during all eternity; while those who have not submitted will have to endure martyrdom, also eternally. Let us admit rather that Christianity appears to us like an absolutely contradictory doctrine, because we only know it perverted by an egoistic Judaism; modern investigations have demonstrated, moreover, that Christianity, free from all alloy, is nothing else than a branch of ancient Buddhism that reached the shores of the Mediterranean after Alexander's expedition to India. In primitive Christianity the essential traits of renunciation of the 'Will to Live' and the desire for the destruction of the world, that is, for the cessation of life, may again be recognized."

Such were Wagner's ideas at the time of the full maturity of his mind, at the very moment when he conceived "Tristan" and traced the sketch of the Buddhistic drama of "The Victors," whose close connection with "Parsifal" we have indicated before. It seems to me impossible to admit a subsequent return to "religion" after so energetically formulated a confession against Catholicism. So much the more may we see in Parsifal a sort of poetic glorification of primitive Christianity free from all Judaic admixture, of which Wagner speaks at the close of his letter to Liszt. But to me it seems more just to apply this idea of Scho-

penhauer to him: "No religious man can become a philosopher, he has no need to become one. And no really philosophic man is religious; he walks without leading-strings, not without peril, but freely." So did Wagner.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that he was greatly absorbed by the question of religion; and in his writings he always recognized the bonds which unite art with religion. Only, the word "religion" must be taken in its metaphysical signification when he uses it. It may even be said that with him the two concepts are adequate to some degree, they overlap. "In the domain apparently so far removed from religion, I have never sought anything but my art," he said in a pamphlet which he wrote in 1864, at the request of Louis II. of Bavaria, upon the subject of the connection between "Religion and the State." In 1850 he had already said the same thing; in 1880 he repeated it still more clearly: "If I were asked, 'Are you going to found a religion?' I should reply that this is impossible; my ideas upon this subject have come to me only in my capacity of artistic creator." In the last of his theoretic pamphlets, "Art and Religion," in which his favorite theory of renunciation of the "Will to Live" reappears, together with the demonstration that Christianity is like the Hindoo religions, art is formally indicated as the only form of religion that can uplift mankind, through compassion, from the unintelligent exercise of life to

the rational exercise of the fundamental principle of soul-union, that is to say, of universal love, of charity, upon which rational and Christian socialism must be founded.

From this pamphlet, probably contemporaneous with "Parsifal," the story of a Neo-Christianity, founded by Wagner, has been deduced. Looking at it carefully, it is difficult to see in it anything more than the logical conclusions of his other philosophic writings, in which the master invariably defines art as a liberating element, which, transforming the world of ideal appearances, thus bestows upon us the secret of the happiness of humanity, that exists in the renunciation of egoistic desires, and in the approximation of all living beings to universal harmony through pity.\*

In all this Wagner follows the tradition of all great German artists and writers on æsthetics, in whose eyes art is not an object of luxury only, but something super-human and supernatural, a revelation that corroborates the symbols and myths of positive religions, and more particularly of the Christian religion. Already in 1852

\* This last philosophic writing by Wagner leads, on the whole, to an optimistic conclusion. Schopenhauer's pessimism, with Wagner, ends in the incessant creation, by art, of a better and quickened life. Upon this interesting subject see Mr. Theo. de Wyzerva's remarkable studies upon The Religion of Richard Wagner and of Count Léo Tolstoï, in the Wagnerian Review of October, 1885; also Richard Wagner's Pessimism, *ibid.*, July, 1885; also Mr. Edward Rod upon Wagner and German Æsthetics, in the Contemporary Review of July 25, 1885.

he had said, in one of his most beautiful letters to Theodore Uhlig, that art was nothing else than "the expression of man's infinite desire toward the best." In 1882, in an article dated from Venice, on November 1st, and dedicated to reminiscences of the productions of "Parsifal" that had just taken place, he wrote again: "To forget the real world of lies in the contemplation of a work of art—imagined, but true—is the reward for the sorrowful necessity that has forced us to recognize that this world is nothing but misery."

Thus, when at the close of "Parsifal" there falls from the height of the illumined cupola these words:

Höchsten Heiles Wunder :  
Erloesung dem Erlöser,

(Wondrous work of mercy,  
Salvation to the Saviour.)

one experiences a sort of relief.

In his first draught of the poem, Wagner ended the drama with two verses which gave its philosophic synthesis:

Gross ist der Zauber des Begehrens,  
Groesser ist die Kraft des Entsagens.

(Great is the charm of desire,  
Greater the power of renunciation.)

In the final version, he substituted for this the simple words we have cited above: "Salvation to the Saviour." The idea is infinitely more poetic, because



it is pure sentiment. As this hymn of earnest gratitude rises slowly higher and higher, sung by the pure voices of children and sustained by more and more ethereal strains from the orchestra, it seems for the moment as though we were hovering above the real world in the pleasant delusion of being freed from the earth. This impression is general, and is confirmed by the frank avowal of a host of auditors. Some declare, as they leave the performance of "*Parsifal*," that they have experienced sensations akin to those they felt as children when entering a large church. Others, and particularly women, are seized by so powerful an emotion that they cannot avoid shedding tears. In reply to someone who expressed himself amazed at seeing her weep, a woman replied very simply: "It brings back to my mind my first Communion." "I know of but one thing more beautiful than '*Parsifal*,'" says Mr. Alfred Ernest,\* "and that is any low mass in any church."

All of these are so many different expressions of the same sentiment. Practice confirms, in this instance, the æsthetic theory of the German philosophers; the artistic sentiment, the impression produced by the work, much blend, in some sort, with the religious sentiment.

In the Middle Ages, Religion had created Art, in

\* *Richard Wagner and the Contemporary Drama*, by Alfred Ernst (Paris, New Library, 1887), one of the best French works upon all of Wagner's works.



order to explain to the people the symbols of Faith and to imbue them more deeply with the meaning of the sacred myths.

By a miracle of genius, Art has become *Religion*, in "Parsifal ;" it has its own purpose within itself, and its symbols are those of the new life.

Hence "Parsifal" is an absolutely unique work of art. I know of none that touches the eternal problem of Humanity more closely, or that throws a more comforting illusion over our doubts and our contradictions.

## THE PERFORMANCE.

THE poem of "Parsifal" appeared on the book-market on December 25, 1877. Immediately after the performance of "The Nibelungen Ring" in the Bayreuth theatre, in 1876, Wagner resumed his sketch of 1864, and during the first months of 1877, the entire drama was written. The composer, however, kept it in his possession for several months more, and did not send it to the press until the end of November, after having added the final touches and definitely finished the text, *ne varietur*.

It seems that, at this time, the musical composition of the work was not far advanced. In several places in his writings and letters, however, Wagner asserts that the principal musical themes came to him while he was working at the poetical elaboration, so that, the poem once completed, he possessed at the same time the entire plan of the music. But no less than five years were required before the score was fully finished.

We possess very accurate knowledge of the various phases of the composition.\* The first act was com-

\* Mr. J. Van Santen Kolff has given the full history of the work in the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, xliii., Nos. 29-33.

menced and completed during the winter of 1877-78. The instrumentation of the overture, containing the principal themes of the score, was completed by December 25, 1878. On that day, being the birthday anniversary of his wife, Madame Cosima Wagner, the master gave himself the pleasure of having parts of it, upon which the ink was hardly dry, performed for her alone. The Duke of Meiningen had placed his choir and orchestra at Wagner's disposal. On Christmas day, at eight o'clock in the morning, the musicians were assembled at Wagner's villa, where, in the large hall of Wahnfried, the first reading of the first entirely written portion of the work took place. In the evening the prelude was repeated before a circle of friends, by the same musicians, after they had rendered a series of works which the master gave himself the pleasure of conducting: they were the overture "*Zur Weihe des Hauses*" (the dedication of the house), and the overture to "*Egmont*" by Beethoven, besides his Symphonies in A and in F; the "*Siegfried Idyll*" followed. The prelude to "*Parsifal*" came at the very end of this private concert.

Wagner liked very much to hear himself, that is to say, he liked to attend to the realization of his thought, himself. How many times, in his letters, does he mourn and lament with regard to "*Lohengrin*," which all Germany was applauding, while he himself had never *heard* one note of it by an orchestra. Not until 1863, in Vienna, did he see "*Lohengrin*" on the stage

for the first time, and it afforded him extraordinary joy.

But "Parsifal" did not cause him such torment. From the first moments, as we have just seen, he could take the position as an auditor of his own work, and that during the very labor of its production.

The entire spring and summer of 1878 were consecrated to the second act, the complete sketch of which was concluded October 11th. During the autumn and winter, the third act was rapidly elaborated, in its turn, so that by the following April 25th (1879), the score was entirely finished in the form of a detailed sketch. With unfeigned satisfaction, he announced this fact in a letter, dated April 28th, to his friend Heckel, of Mannheim, the founder of the first Wagner Society, and one of the master's most ardent admirers.

But the sketch once put upon paper was only half the work accomplished. Its instrumentation still remained to be done, of which long and delicate task the outsider cannot form an idea. The instrumentation of "Parsifal" occupied Wagner for nearly three consecutive years, from the end of 1878 until the first days of 1882, and it wearied him greatly. He often complained of having been, thus far, unable to train young artists who were capable of aiding him in this work.\*

\* Judith Gautier. Letter from Bayreuth, dated September 29, 1881, and addressed to *Rappel*. Reproduced in the volume entitled Richard Wagner and his Poetical Work.

But who else could have known as well as he all the resources of instrumental color and of orchestral combinations?

Besides, Wagner was extraordinarily fastidious with regard to instrumentation, even more so than with all the remainder of the material execution of his ideas. The assignment of a theme or of an accompanying figure to such and such an instrument was the object of long meditation, because all things, for him, had to have a purpose and signification. While still busy with the sketch, he admitted to his friend, Mr. von Wolzogen, that he was exceedingly careful to keep the whole work in the "simple tone of sanctity." He wished to suppress yet certain modulations and intervals that were not in this tone. With a set purpose, he wished to avoid all pathetic harmony and sentimental melody. Master-pieces are not made by inspiration or by a first effort, either in music or in literature and painting.

The instrumentation of the first act seems to have taken the longest time. The prelude was finished, as we have seen, on December 25, 1878; but the entire act was not completed until the spring of 1880. The following autumn Wagner went with his whole family to Italy, where he established himself in the Villa d'Angri, on the slope of the Pausilippe, near Naples. Here he added the finishing touches to the second act, the act of seduction. Here also, on May 22, 1881, a few days before returning to Germany, he gave, for

the first time, the final grand scene of the first act, before a circle of intimate friends. Madame Wagner and the children sang the choruses of the youths and the voices from the cupola. Some German friends, musicians who were travelling through Naples, were appointed to sing the choruses of the knights, and Wagner recited the soli. Joseph Rubinstein presided at the piano.

The following summer Wagner spent in Germany, and particularly in Munich, where he had the overture performed before the king of Bavaria, at a concert given for him alone, by the orchestra of the theatre. On the occasion of this performance he wrote the commentary-programme to the overture, which was published in the collection of his posthumous works, and which will be mentioned later.

The work of instrumentation was not resumed until the autumn, at the time of his last journey to Italy. This time, Wagner pushed on further than Naples and took up his abode for the winter in Palermo. Here, under the quasi-oriental skies of Sicily, and amid its dazzling verdure, the master-piece was at last finished on January 13, 1882, scarcely six months before its public performance at Bayreuth, which took place on July 28th of the same year.

It will have been noticed that somewhat lengthy intervals separate the completion of the different acts. But it must not be believed that the master was resting

in sweet idleness. During these intermissions, he consulted with his artistic collaborators about all that had a bearing upon the scenic production of the work, without detriment to the thousand other occupations that his insatiable activity and very extensive relations incessantly made for him.

In 1877, upon the solicitations of his most ardent admirers, he and Hans Richter went to London to conduct seven concerts where Wagner's works, principally selections from "The Ring of the Nibelungen," were performed. The result of the performances of the "Ring" in the Bayreuth theatre, in 1876, not having satisfied Wagner's expectations from a financial standpoint, it became necessary to stimulate the zeal of the patrons of the work; thus arose numerous cares, committee meetings, incessant correspondence and writings calling upon all the friends of his art to co-operate with the work of Bayreuth.

In addition to this Wagner had established an artistic review in Bayreuth, in 1878, called the *Baireuther Blätter*, the object of which was to serve as the organ of the Wagnerian movement. Although Mr. von Wolzogen had assumed the real management of it, Wagner gave much attention to the journal, and contributed numerous articles to it, the collection of which forms a large volume. The following year, he wrote his dissertation upon "Art and Religion," his last theoretic and philosophic work. Then, in 1881, he met the Russian



painter, Paul Joukowsky, in Italy, with whom he elaborated the scenery and arranged the designs of the costumes and of all the accessories. We remark by the way, that the decorations of the Grail temple were directly inspired by the dome of Sienna. All summer, after his return to Bayreuth, was passed in piano rehearsal with the principal soloists and in conferences with machinists and costumers. In this active life not one hour was lost, after days devoted to the severe task of composition and of instrumentation.

At last came the time of the performance. It was an event for artistic Europe. Artists repaired to Bayreuth from all quarters—from Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, Moscow, St. Petersburg, etc. Ever since 1876, that is, since the performance of the “*Nibelungen*” and the inaugural festivals of the theatre, its doors had remained closed. In 1876, the performance had been only accessible to the possessors of patron’s cards, in other words, to a special and quite limited public, a veritable élite of amateurs gathered from all parts, from among the innovator’s adepts, who were more or less attached to his ideas. For a long time, Wagner wished to keep away from Bayreuth the paying public—the mere curiosity-seeker, attracted by the strangeness of a performance in a darkened hall, with an invisible orchestra, and the more or less melomaniac tourist, anxious, upon reaching home, to be able to tell of the extraordinary things he had witnessed over there, upon that stage of

which the papers and society spoke so much. But overpowered by practical necessities, he was finally obliged to yield the point, and upon this occasion the Bayreuth theatre was open to the paying public.\* Nor could the step be regretted; the material success was equal to the artistic triumph. The proceeds of the sixteen performances of "Parsifal" were sufficiently large to guarantee the regular and continued opening of the theatre for the future, and since 1882, performances have been held generally once in two years, at which not only "Parsifal," but also other works of the master are given.†

The performance of "Parsifal," moreover, equalled, if it did not surpass in the homogeneity of its ensemble the performance of the "Ring of the Nibelungen" in 1876. It is but just to recall the names of the artists who created the rôles, and who, for the most part, consented, in a rare spirit of abnegation, to pass two months at

\* The first two performances only, those of July 26th and 28th, were reserved for the patrons of the Bayreuth work. The third, of July 30th, was open to the public.

† In 1884, after Wagner's death, the Bayreuth Theatre gave only Parsifal; in 1886, Parsifal and Tristan; in 1888, Parsifal and Die Meistersinger; in 1889, Parsifal, Tristan, and Die Meistersinger. These performances are held during the months of July and August, that is, during the vacation in the German theatres, in order that their principal artists may be allowed to take part at Bayreuth. In 1889, the regent of Bavaria, the real successor of the unfortunate king, Louis II., took the Bayreuth Theatre officially under his *protectorate*, and Emperor William II. also promised it his support. The two princes were present at the performances of Parsifal and of Die Meistersinger, on the 19th and 21st of August, 1889.

Bayreuth without receiving any remuneration save their personal expenses. The artists are as follows: Madame Materna, of the Vienna Opera, the stirring creator of the rôle of Brunhilde, also created Kundry, sharing the character, during the following performances, with Madame Malten, of the Dresden Theatre, and with Marianna Brandt, of Berlin. The tenor Winkelmann (of Vienna) played Parsifal, alternating with Mr. Gudehus (of Dresden) and Mr. Jaeger (of Bayreuth). Amfortas was Reichmann, the Viennese baritone, and Gurnemanz was sung by the never-to-be-forgotten Scaria; while Kling-sor found an interpreter in Mr. Karl Hill (of Schwerin), whose fine timbre of voice and thrilling delivery were admirably suited to the character of the magician. Mr. Hermann Levi, of the Munich Opera, conducted the orchestra, every rehearsal of which had taken place in the master's presence. To give an idea of the care bestowed upon this performance, I would add that the rôle of Titurel, who has but a few phrases to sing, was assigned to a celebrated artist, Mr. Kindermann, of the Munich Theatre, and the small parts of the pages, squires, and flower-maidens were all filled by picked artists borrowed from the best German theatres, where some of them were accustomed to sing leading rôles.

The scenery, costumes, and decorations were all in keeping. The forest of Montsalvat, the moving scenery during the ascent of Parsifal and Gurnemanz to the Grail temple, and the interior of the sanctuary in the

first act, the tower of Klingsor's castle in the second, the clearing in the forest of Montsalvat, and the meadow that seems to cover itself with flowers in the third act, all impressed the spectators greatly. Only the scenery of Klingsor's gardens, the work of the Russian painter, Paul Joukowski, did not seem to meet the general expectation. Wagner wanted it absolutely improbable, a conception of a dream, a prodigious confusion of tropical vegetation twining about the pillars of the castle, surrounding the walls, and oppressing the living being that ventured among them by their dazzling colors and voluptuous odors. The enormous shoots and gigantic flowers that the painter threw on his canvas in profusion, appeared, for the most part, crude in tone and offensive to the eye.

But that is a mere detail. The work as a whole, the music, the poetry, the acting, all these elements harmoniously blended, not like masses welded together, but rather, according to Mr. Emile Hennequin's\* expression, mingling like related atoms, produced an extraordinary impression.

The synthesis of art, which is the basis of Wagner's whole theory of æsthetics, has its fullest expression in "Parsifal." In a letter to his friend, Charles Gaillard, the master had already explained, with reference to "Lohengrin," how he conceived his dramatic works.

\* Wagnerian Æsthetics and the Spencerian Theory, by E. Hennequin, Wagnerian Review, November, 1885.

They came to him as a whole ; his imagination did not settle separately upon the various elements which were to enter into the composition, it called them up simultaneously, so that, when the conception of the whole was once completed, the work of carrying it out and the development of its parts were only a sort of mechanical labor. Hence we find those long silences in all of Wagner's works, and those protracted gesticulations of the personages. It seems as though speech hesitated and paused for a moment, feeling itself powerless to explain the subtle shades of sentiment which the poet lends them. It is at such points that the symphony comes in to suggest what the character cannot say, while the gesture definitely settles the suggestion of the music. Thus the culminating points of the drama are fixed in never-to-be-forgotten pictures which cannot be effaced from the memory when once they have been seen. This is a very special and original feature of the Wagnerian art. The master of Bayreuth was not opposed to movement on the stage, as it has been somewhat thoughtlessly said and repeated ; but he frequently stops it because he is certain of producing a stronger and more striking impression by the harmonious agreement of attitudes that are evolved from the eloquent commentary of the orchestra. In this we see combined the thought of the musician and of the painter, which is one of the most original features of Wagner's physiognomy as artist. Mr. Charles Tardieu has pointed out

this view in a page of excellent criticism, that I will not forego the pleasure of citing in its entirety.\*

“Munich,” says he, “remains inseparable from Wagner. He has lived there, enjoying not only the august friendship of King Louis II., but also the intimacy of Albrecht Dürer and of his predecessors. He has seen Italy, also, with its churches and its museums. The early masters of Germany, Italy, and Flanders have appealed to his imagination, and after having seen ‘Parsifal,’ and seen it more than once, one is persuaded that Wagner must have aimed essentially at transposing in scenic effects, colored by symphonic tones, the impressions left upon him by the favorite themes of these old masters, whose awkwardness is so grand and imposing, and whose candor is so refined. This accounts, without doubt, for the important part that is given in ‘Parsifal’ to the actor’s silence, even to the immobility of his pantomime, for the preponderance of the orchestra over the words and of the tableaux over the action. The third act, for example, is little more than a series of moving triptychs. Parsifal is on his knees before the lance: his attitude is one of mute adoration. The orchestra expresses his ecstasy, for the musician takes upon his palette of sound the tones that the painter would have drawn from his color-box. But Parsifal utters not a word, he hardly moves. It is like

\* Charles Tardieu: Letter to the *Indépendance belge*, August, 1886.









the side pieces of a Gothic triptych, a portrait of the donator.

“ Gurnemanz blesses Klingsor’s conqueror, the future king of the Grail, and he in turn baptizes Kundry, who washes his feet like a Magdalene by Mabuse. This is an evangelical picture, the poetry of which is taken up by the orchestra in a motive full of spirit, of purity, and of faith ; but speech adds nothing to it. It seems to have been conceived expressly to satisfy the desire Wagner experienced, to transcribe in music his pictorial impressions ; for here we have the central panel of the triptych of which we have before seen one of the side-pieces.

“ The temple also recalls certain grand compositions that were dear to the old masters. Here, again, long scenic silences force upon the audience the sensation of plastic beauty ; they are sustained by the orchestra that determines the character of the tableau. Even the venerable Gurnemanz himself, with his long white beard, made me think of St. Jerome by Cima da Conegliana, one of the marvels of the old Munich Pinaothek. And the care with which the attitudes of the most unimportant figurants are regulated, in accordance with the master’s minute indications, confirms me in this idea that, if Wagner did not have exclusively in view the adaptation of the conceptions of primitive painting to the conditions of the lyric stage, the transposition is none the less a characteristic element, of

which it will be necessary to take account before one can raise one's self to the level of 'Parsifal.' "

I have attached some importance to the citation of this entire page of fine and judicious criticism, because it duly fastens the attention upon this peculiarity of Wagner's genius.

This ability to conceive the picture of the scene, as well as the constant underlying thought to combine the acting and the painting with the drama, properly so called, undoubtedly centres in the earliest and most deeply rooted impressions of his childhood.

After the death of her first husband, Wagner's mother married an actor, named Emil Geyer, who was connected with the Dresden Theatre. Now, Emil Geyer was not only a dramatic artist with real talent, who was applauded in Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, Würzburg, and Munich, and who was well known through some plays in the popular style, that were in vogue; but he was also a painter, and had achieved distinguished success as a portrait-painter. It is a really curious coincidence, that during his stay in Munich, where he appeared upon the stage, he was called upon to paint the portrait of King Louis I., of Bavaria, the grandfather of Louis II., who was subsequently to become the friend and most fervent admirer of Richard Wagner. It is equally known that Geyer exhibited in one of the Dresden salons a copy of the *Assumption of the Virgin*, by Luca Giordano, that made quite a sensation. Although

but little is known of Wagner's childhood, we can state the fact that, for a long time it was Geyer's dream to make his step-son a painter, and that he gave him drawing lessons. Young Richard is even said to have shown remarkable talent, but his imagination was in advance of his ability, and from the first he wished to paint large pictures such as he saw in his step-father's studio. One fine day he gave up his studies because he found it irksome "always to draw eyes, noses, and mouths." Mr. Glasenapp, who recalls this piquant incident in his notes\* upon Wagner's family and childhood, had it from the lips of the author of "Parsifal" himself.

Like all of Wagner's works, "Parsifal" found criticism, on the whole, undecided and full of contradictions. Nothing is more instructive than to re-read to-day the pamphlets and the articles that appeared at that time. In Germany, as in France, there was a most curious mixture of incomplete judgments and of admiring exclamations. It seemed as though the critics had no sooner bestowed encomiums than they wished to retract them.

For instance, Mr. Victor Wilder did not hesitate to say, in the course of his very profound and eulogistic lecture on the poem and the music, which appeared in the *Parlement*, that he considered " 'Parsifal' the

\* Notes of Mr. Glasenapp in the *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch*, published in 1886 by M. J. Kürschner.

masterpiece of the poet-composer. I do not see any other but 'Tristan' in which his reformatory ideas are applied with such rigor. His poetry asserts itself in 'Parsifal' with astonishing grandeur, and is carried out in a spirit of inexorable logic." But the mysticism of the work troubles the eminent critic. He believes this mysticism to be far removed from the spirit of the age, and he goes so far as to declare, finally, that "the suffering of Amfortas touch us infinitely less than do the tortures of Œdipus, or of Prometheus."

To Mr. Saint-Saëns' mind, "simplicity is Wagner's least fault, and many a well-endowed young composer can write, without any effort, by far more fascinating things than the duo in Parsifal." \*

In a moment of expansion, however, at Bayreuth, Mr. Saint-Saëns had admitted to Mr. Stoullig, that one felt like a very insignificant sort of fellow, when listening to such works. "But, no matter," added he, "I am very glad to know it, so that I may do differently."

Mr. Edward Stoullig, in the *National*, complains of the length and the constant recurrence of the numerous leading motives. The last tableau of the first act, however, and the whole of the last act, "will remain," says he, "among the number of the most beautiful things that have been heard in music." In *l'Évène-*

\* Preface to *Harmony and Melody*. Paris: Calmann-Levy. 1885.

ment, Mr. Hippeau pays earnest and splendid homage to the master's genius, even while thinking that the *leitmotive*, or themes incessantly varied and modulated, wonderful as their perpetual transformation may be, are the negation of the French genius, which exacts clearness, simplicity, abundance, and variety of ideas. Evidently, Wagner did not write "Parsifal" in order to assert French genius.\*

The impression of Mr. Paul Bourget, the celebrated novelist, who made the trip to Bayreuth in 1883, and in 1886, may be placed opposite these judgments of "men in the profession." He writes thus to the *Journal des Débats*: "It is impossible to have been present at one of the Bayreuth performances without recognizing that here, at least, neither fashion nor curiosity are wrong, and that the composer of "Tristan" and of "Parsifal" is one of the most powerful geniuses of this age. The second act of "Tristan," the two ceremonies of the Grail, in the first and third acts of "Parsifal," and the wonderful scene of the seduction in the second act, fill the souls of those who hear them with unusual enchantment."

In Berlin and in Vienna, the same hesitancy and uncertainty were exhibited. Mr. Paul Lindau, after having declared that "Wagner has, for some time,

\* For more details on this subject, see Richard Wagner, Judged in France, by George Servières, where very curious and interesting citations will be found.

shown a certain inclination toward mysticism and toward a Christianity abounding in miracles, and which many centuries separate from our age of historic and philologic research," wittily styles "*Parsifal*," *Christianity in music*, in opposition to *Judaism in music*. "Undoubtedly, it is not the Christianity of Wolfram von Eschenbach," continues he, "not piety united with mundane joys, and armed with the glittering breast-plate of the German knight; it is rather a sombre and austere Christianity, clad in the sad-hued robe of the monk, and preferring to wield the torch to light the stake rather than a shining sword to defend some noble lady." \* To speak of the stake in connection with this work, entirely consecrated to *Mitleid*, or pity, is, we must acknowledge, a somewhat strange exegesis. Very little more, and Mr. Lindau would see an anti-semitic pamphlet in "*Parsifal*."

This does not deter him, however, from frankly declaring that one would have to be more stupid than *Parsifal* not to see that Wagner, "beyond his merits as poet and composer, possesses a perfect knowledge of the theatre and a scenic talent of the first order."

Another critic, taking the opposite side from Mr. Lindau, denounces Wagner as the *Antechrist*.

To this a religious journal replies that "*Parsifal*" is

\* Paul Lindau : Richard Wagner, a collection of articles that appeared in different reviews, gathered in one volume and published in Berlin ; translated into French by J. Weber. Paris : Hinrichsen & Co. 1885.

a work of lofty moral bearing, and full of the most generous Christian spirit. But this does not prevent Mr. Ehrlich from condemning the second act as a spectacle of revolting immorality.

Mr. Hanslick, the well-known musical feuilletonist of the *Neue Presse* of Vienna, had declared, at the time that the poem appeared, in 1878, that it was "a horrible libretto." After having seen the work at Bayreuth, he repeated that it was a drama which would not last; only as the libretto of an opera, he consented to accord it some merit. "If you want to consider 'Parsifal' as an entertaining opera, or an opera of fairyland," said he, "you will certainly find in it parts of grand inspiration and dazzling effect worthy of all admiration."

Mr. Engel, of Berlin, on the contrary, set forth the beautiful arrangement of the subject from a purely dramatic standpoint. "The three acts of 'Parsifal' show us the three essential periods in the life of the hero; the first act being the revelation of his mission, the second, his struggle, and the third, his redemption." Each one of these acts is broadly developed in such a manner as to form a complete tableau; the frame-work of the drama is perfect.

For the one it is the first act in which the unity is most complete, the second act drags, and the third act is a repetition of the first. For another, the second is the perfect act with its animated scene between Kundry and Klingsor, its delicious scene of the flower-maidens, and



its passionate scene between Parsifal and Kundry. "This whole act," says Mr. Lackowitz, "is, from a musical and dramatic point of view, one of the most thrilling things that Wagner has conceived." In Mr. Hanslick's eyes it is the third act that is the most homogeneous and complete. This same third act is odious to Mr. Frengel, the critic of the *National Gazette* of Berlin, who cannot endure "the mixture of sensuality and religion."

It is even worse when we come to the music. The march that accompanies the change of scenery in the first act, and that amazed the majority of the French critics, possesses absolutely no merit in Mr. Hanslick's eyes. Mr. Speidel thinks the flower-maidens' chorus of small importance, although of a pleasant sonority. Mr. Hanslick places it among the most charming pages that have come from the master's hand. Mr. Theodor Helm pronounces it a masterpiece of dramatic polyphonism. To Mr. Schrattenholz's mind it is a waltz unequal to those of Strauss!

And so on, throughout the entire score and the drama, a vacillating and uncertain criticism pours out its contradictory judgments.\*

I merely cite, but do not estimate, these curious differences of impressions. Afterward there was a sort

\* Upon this subject see Mr. Tappert's interesting pamphlet, "Pour et Contre" (For and Against), which ridicules, in a most cutting manner, the estimates of the German critics, and brings up, at their expense, an incredible number of blunders.

of compromise effected between the diverse opinions, which presented this peculiarity: that, aside from certain pages immediately applauded, they uttered estimates of the different parts of the work that completed one another. Such a scene did not strike this critic, while it powerfully moved his neighbor; such another wearied this one, while, on the contrary, it delighted the other. So that, if we placed these partially favorable opinions together, I believe we should have the most surprising article of admiring criticism that has ever been written by anyone upon the drama as a whole.

And the drama is so vast, so complex, and so profound through the sensations and the thoughts that it awakens within us, that it seems impossible for anyone auditor to experience and to express them all at a first hearing. Later, as we penetrate further into the deeper meaning of the conception, our impressions become clearer and more defined. This person has seen, for the second time, the scene of the drama that offended him, and now it does not trouble him any more; another has learned Wagner's philosophic ideas, and now he understands what at first seemed to him obscure.

We must have the courage to say that in these vagaries, in this uncertainty of judgment, this vacillation of the mind that hesitates and does not know exactly where to fix its admiration, lies the condemnation of our present system of criticism. Instead of being purely

analytic, historic, and didactic, modern criticism applies itself to rendering decrees which, in most cases, are not even judgments. We are dominated by a school of writers, feuilletonists by choice, whose sole care it is to express, easily and cleverly, their own personal impressions, which often possess no other value than the very ephemeral importance of some individual much or less made of in certain salons or literary clubs. This criticism takes pleasure in a certain elegant and mocking dilettantism that leads all theories of art back to the singularly superficial and fundamentally vulgar idea of the greater or less degree of amusement that a work may give.

This school would like to say of Art, or of the Beautiful, what Renan said of God: *that it is possible*. It suspects the Beautiful and guesses at Art, but has not the courage to acknowledge them. For its own convenience it forgets that Art does not admit of indifference any more than does Religion, and that the Beautiful only exists in proportion as we *believe* in it. Artistic faith is not to be conceived without a certain fanaticism that, to be more or less tolerant, is not necessarily less exclusive.

The Beautiful is an entirely relative term that does not exist and formulate outside the mind that conceives it; and it will be broader and more elevated in proportion to the extent that the mind, in turn, frees itself from commonplace and vulgar thoughts. It is with

Art, which springs from the idea of the Beautiful, as with religion, that springs from the idea of God. All the races of mankind have made the God—and the religion—which they bear within their own minds, that is, which they are worthy of. The more intellectual and physical superiority a race possesses, the more its religion will come into harmony with the refinement of its customs, the moderation of its spirit, and the expansive force of life that is within it. Scepticism in art, as in religious subjects, is but an excess of refinement, and it is the fatal sign of decadence; for, in reality, it is nothing else than the unconscious denial of a power that has no longer the energy to assert itself, or of a sentiment that doubts itself and that is very near determining its own negation.

Then, too, the criticism now actually in vogue is absolutely inefficient and unimportant, because, being the result of an individual sensation, more or less adequate to the work, it can never pretend to express the universality of human sentiment in view of this work, not even the unanimous sentiment of the people of the same country, or of the same city. If it sometimes hits upon this sentiment, it does so as the result of pure chance.

This explains the droll contradiction of so many opinions, just cited, that agree upon some points and diverge so widely upon all the others.

I would excuse myself for this digression, if it had no other object than to expose once more the weak-

nesses, after all very excusable, of our literary and artistic critics who are obliged to judge everything in twenty-four hours ; but it has a more direct connection with my subject. It shows us the two theories of æstheticism at close quarters, disputing each other's precedence, as they have done ever since the eighteenth century. The one reduces all art to a more or less amusing witticism, while the other, seeing in the artistic sentiment the expression of man's highest aspirations, of his eternal desire for the best, makes art the complement of ethics and of morality. The latter Wagner always affirmed and proclaimed, both theoretically in his writings, and practically in his dramatic works.

In fact, the great reform for which he fought and suffered so much, has no other purpose than the moral elevation of the theatre. Starting from "Tannhäuser," it terminated in "Parsifal." With regard to the last, the very name that was given it is a complete characterization. Wagner called it neither *opera*, *lyric drama*, nor a *composition for a theatrical festival*, as he defined the "Nibelungen ;" he gave it the name of *Bühnenweihfestspiel*, i.e., *festival composition for the consecration of the stage*, the word consecration being used here in the quasi religious sense of *Weihen*, to dedicate, to consecrate, to bless.

The intention is evident. The stage is called upon here to act as the medium of a work of lofty import ; it

is no longer a simple spectacle for the pleasure of the senses that the stage is destined to offer us ; it is the theatre of the ancient Greeks, or that of the Middle Ages in certain mysteries, becoming again a place where the teachings of religion, of philosophy, and of national tradition were consecrated. Only — and herein lies the grandeur and the elevation of Wagner's æsthetic and philosophic idea — he does not place the moralizing import of the stage in the dogmatic tendency of the works, but in the work of art itself, which is conceived as an ideal representation of the actions of life, in other words, of happiness and of unhappiness.

From this point of view, " Parsifal " is a magnificent synthesis. Under the concrete forms of the three characters, Parsifal, Kundry, and the Erring King, Wagner has condensed his whole system of the moral world, the amplification of one of the most profound of religious and philosophic conceptions that exist, and one which goes back to the very origin of all the Indo-European races, the Buddhistic theory.

The *Will to live*, the *Desire* incessantly active and never able to find *Repose* — this is Kundry. *Suffering*, the offspring of *Desire*, always renewing itself and perpetuating suffering through its efforts toward Redemption — this is Amfortas.

The *Renunciation* of the *Will to live* and of *Desire*, achieving Redemption and the *Repose* of the ego by

the negation of the principle of Suffering—this is Parsifal—and this, also, is Kundry's death.

Thus Wagner has created a work of art wherein philosophic realism and artistic idealism answer admirably to the traditions and aspirations of the race to which he belonged ; but this work possesses, at the same time, an indisputably universal value through its unrestricted character.



## THE SCORE.

It now remains for us to speak of the score.

Wagner, it is true, never intended that his music should be separated from the words or the action which it accompanies, since the musical part of his dramas had been conceived and had received its special form as an indivisible element of the same artistic complex. But the music in Wagner's work plays so important a rôle that it is impossible not to devote a special and detailed analysis to it.

Excellent works of this kind have been undertaken in Germany in explanation of the "Nibelungen," of "Tristan," and of "Parsifal." Mr. Hans von Wolzogen, who was the Bayreuth master's assiduous collaborator in the editing and managing of the *Bayreuther Blaetter*, a review devoted to the defence of theatrical reform, published especially a whole series of essays which contributed greatly to making Wagner's system of composition better known and understood. These little pamphlets, furthermore, possess the great interest

of having been written, in some sort, under the master's inspiration, and they give the thematic catalogue of each score, as Wagner probably arranged it. Without binding myself to Mr. von Wolzogen's purely analytic method, I shall endeavor to explain, as clearly as words permit, the development of the musical ideas in "Parsifal."

The system of *Leitmotive*, or leading motives, is followed with absolute rigor. This system has been analyzed, explained, and commented upon so often, that it will suffice now simply to recall what is meant by leading motives. The question here is not of developed melodies, or of harmonious phrases; the *Leitmotiv* is sometimes a well-characterized melody, sometimes a rhythmic and melodic arrangement, and sometimes even a simple succession of harmonics which serve to characterize an idea, or a sentiment, and which, when combined in various ways, form the plot of the musical discourse by their repetition, their juxtaposition, or their development.

The overture to "Parsifal" will furnish us at once with some of the most important of these characteristic themes of the work. This introduction, a composition of lofty character, transports the auditor, as do all the Wagnerian preludes, into the peculiar atmosphere of the drama.

In a commentary programme which he wrote for the first rendering of the overture in Munich, before King

Louis II., of Bavaria, Wagner thus set forth its general ideas :

Love.—Faith.—Hope.

First theme : Love.—Take my body, take my blood, for the sake of our love. (Repeated softer by angels' voices.)

Take my body, take my blood in remembrance of our love. (Again repeated softer.)

Second theme : Faith.—*Promise* of Redemption through Faith. Firm and full of vigor, Faith is manifested, full-grown, expectant, even in suffering.

To the renewed promise, Faith responds from the sweetest heights—as though borne upon the wings of the white dove descending from above, ever taking hold upon human hearts more entirely and largely, until it fills the whole world of nature ; then, as if gently soothed, it turns its gaze heavenward again.

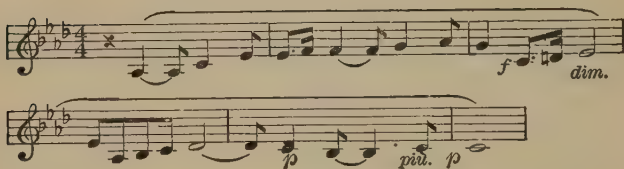
Then, once more, from the strain of the solitude rises the cry of loving compassion : the agony, the bloody sweat of the Mount of Olives, the divine suffering of Golgotha—the body grows pallid, the blood flows, and, dripping, glows with a celestial light of benediction, shedding the joy of Redemption by Love upon all who live and suffer. We are prepared for him, Amfortas, the sullied guardian of the sanctuary, who—O, terrible heart-sorrow !—must be driven into the divinely expiatory presence of the grave. Will there be a

redemption for the cruel suffering of his soul? Once more we hear the promise and—we hope.

Such is the poetic and philosophical synthesis of the introduction. Let us now see the musical realization.\*

Without any preparation, the composition opens with the following broad melodic phrase :

## I.



This is the melody that is sung later in the great religious scene of the first act, by the squires and knights of the Grail, during the mystic celebration of the Eucharist :

Take my blood, take my body  
In remembrance of our love.

It is played at first without any accompaniment, by the violins and wood instruments in unison.

Nothing can give an idea of the impression that this

\* In the following analysis, the Roman numerals will refer to the themes that are given, while the Arabic numerals apply to the small score for the voice and piano, arranged by Mr. Kleinmichel, which, pending the appearance of the French edition, is the most widely used in France and Belgium. All extracts from the score are reproduced with the consent of the editors, Messrs. B. Schott's Sons, at Mainz.

theme produces, as the first notes, in their vague tonality\* and their undefined sonority, rise from the invisible orchestra, as from an unknown and mysterious distance. No one, at Bayreuth, but has experienced at this moment a singular emotion, a strange thrill. One feels as though transported to the realm of the supernatural and of the dream.

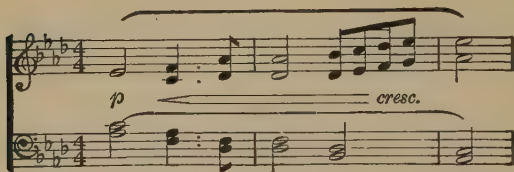
To a soft accompaniment of arpeggios on strings, the same theme is repeated four times in succession, given alternately by the trumpet and the hautboys in unison, and the strings supported by the wood instruments, now above and now below the arpeggios of the harps and violins.

Immediately afterward, without any other transition than a series of broken chords upon the tonic of C minor, the trombones and trumpets set forth the second theme, which may be called the *Grail-motiv*, because it is used throughout the entire work to characterize the worship of the holy relic. This is a very short

\* This word is perhaps improper. The tonality of the piece is A flat major, but it is changed, from the beginning, in the theme cited above. The change of the D (third measure) which, instead of being D flat is D natural, transposes the modality of the scale. Instead of the major scale, A flat, B flat, C, D flat, E flat, we have A flat, B flat, C, D natural, E flat; which is to say that the first four degrees of the scale are whole tones; the first semi-tone, D-E flat, is not heard until after the fourth degree (D), instead of occurring after the third (C). Wagner uses here one of the old Greek scales; his theme is in the pure *hypolidien* mode. The ancients thought this mode proper to funeral chants and to lofty and divine meditations.

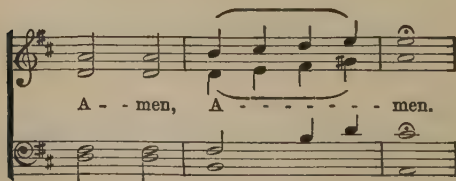
theme, which will subsequently reappear in almost every scene, sometimes alone, sometimes joined to other themes, sometimes modified in its rhythm, but always preserving its characteristic harmonics. It is as follows :

## II.



In reality it does not belong to Wagner in his own right, but is a cadence borrowed from church music. The ascending progression of sixths that forms the end of the motive is found in the form of the *Amen* of the Saxon liturgy, and it is still in use to-day in the court church at Dresden, where it is sung in the following form :

## III.



Through a singular coincidence, Mendelssohn used this same theme in his "Reformation Symphony."

More was not needed to incite the over-zealous partisans of the composer of the symphony to bring forth with a charge of plagiarism against Wagner. The truth is that the two masters, both of whom lived in Dresden for a time, were probably impressed by the harmonic character of this ending, and noted it down for their future use, each according to his own method. It need hardly be said that their methods were entirely different. And this is sufficient to constitute a personal proprietary right, in each one's favor, to this simple formula, which had become public property and of which the author was unknown.\*

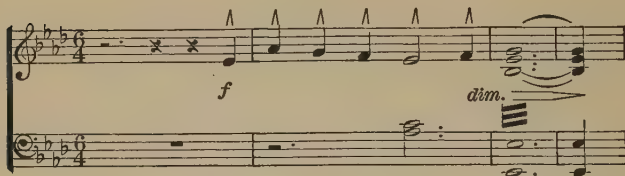
The *Grail-motive* is repeated twice; then, without transition, appears the third theme, the *Faith-motive*. Again we have here a well-defined melody, developed in six measures, of which the first arrangement is re-

\* Mr. W. Tappert, the scholarly Berlin connoisseur of music, was the first to point out the liturgical origin of this theme, in reply to the charge of plagiarism brought forward by Wagner's adversaries. A Vienna connoisseur of music, Mr. R. Heuberger, has quite recently given it as his opinion that this motive might have been composed by an Italian musician, Giuseppe Antonio Silvani, choir-master of St. Stephen's basilica in Bologna at the close of the eighteenth century, and one of the good composers of church music of that day. Silvani's works, among which there are a great number of *Responsoria*, were probably brought over to Dresden by one of the choir-masters of the kings of Saxony. These choir-masters were nearly all Italians, or at least educated in Italian schools of music. In the court church at Dresden, they still sing some of Silvani's compositions, at least so Mr. Heuberger says. From this fact he concludes that the *Amen* given above may have come from this Italian master. This is mere hypothesis, however,

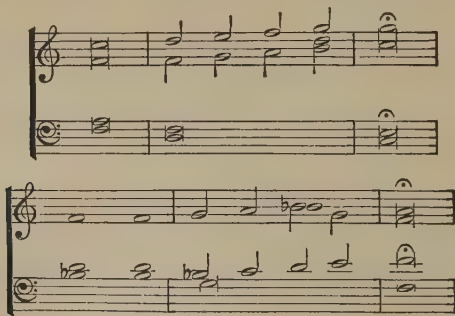


peated every two measures, each time with new harmonics, and a conclusion at the last measure. The theme properly so-called

## IV.



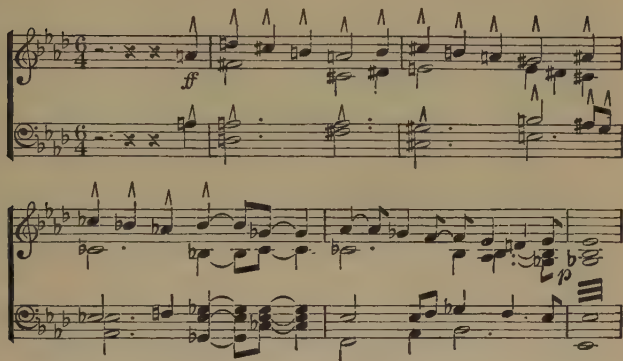
is first given out by the brasses, in two different repetitions, thus far, the *Amen* in question has not been found in any original score ; only copies of it exist, which are used in the choir, and which date back to 1838. Mr. Heuberger gives, besides, the two following forms of the *Amen*, according to the different versions that exist in the royal library in Dresden.



It seemed to me interesting to quote them for comparison with Wagner's version. It is nevertheless certain that this *Amen* must be very old ; its harmonic character indicates a composer of the seventeenth century. Numbers of analogous harmonic successions are found in Palestrina's masses.

tions, like a categoric affirmation ; the melody is then developed entirely, as follows :

## V.



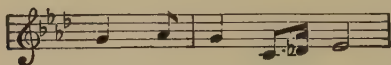
The strings then take up again the motive of the Grail, the symbol to which Faith is applied ; then the Faith motive reappears, repeated four times in succession in different tonalities, first by the flutes and horns ; then by the strings ; the third time by the brasses (*ff* and this time in  $\frac{3}{4}$  measure), with a prolongation of certain notes to a tremolo accompaniment by the strings ; at last, for the fourth time, again very softly by the wood instruments.

It is necessary to hear the orchestra in order to appreciate the variety of expression that these shades and the differences of orchestration give to this same phrase, now energetic and stern, now enfolding and caressing, or mysterious and mystical, according as it is sent out by the brasses, whispered by the strings and the wood

instruments, or sung by children's voices, as at the finale of the first act, where it plays an important part in the picture of the temple.

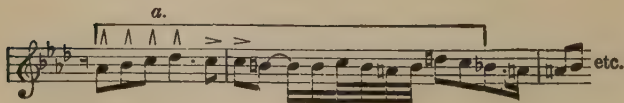
A roll of kettle-drums in A flat, accompanied by a tremolo on the double basses, giving the low counter F, makes a heavy, sonorous tone succeed these dazzling harmonics; this produces the effect of darkness after a vivid and radiant light. This transition leads back to the motive of the Eucharist (I.) in the wood instruments and then in the violoncellos. Only the motive is, this time, not complete. Wagner leaves off at the third measure and forms from this conclusion a

## VI.



new motive. This arrangement is repeated several times with a more and more mournful accent. It becomes a wail of marvellous poignancy when this arrangement by degrees reaches the C sharp of the clarinets and the altos. Then a fourth theme appears, sprung also from the Eucharist motive.

## VII.



The first two measures of this theme (a), which are contained, but in a simpler form (without appoggiatura),

in the Eucharist motive, will serve in future to characterize more particularly the *sacred spear* that pierced Christ's side, and which also caused Amfortas's wound ; this lance which made the blood flow that became the wine of the Blessed Sacrament, and which now is in Klingsor's, the magician's, hands. The association of ideas by which Wagner was led to detach this last arrangement from his first theme, in order to make it a separate theme, is as ingenious as it is poetic, and it is impossible not to admire the intense expression which he knows how to give to these few notes apparently insignificant.

Just as this fourth theme, which applies at once to the sufferings of our Saviour and to those of Amfortas, sounds from the whole orchestra, the overture reaches its climax. Like the "Lohengrin" overture, the overture to "Parsifal" is developed, by successive gradations, to a maximum of expression which then diminishes imperceptibly to a *pianissimo*. The desired effect may thus be represented by diagram :



The synthesis itself of the drama has thus been set forth in its entirety. The remainder is only a peroration, the necessary logical conclusion reached by the ideas with which the different themes we have just seen

are associated. By the sight of suffering, Parsifal attains to pity and saves Amfortas : this is the Eucharist motive (I.), which signifies both devotion and sacrifice, that is to say, Love, which will be the closing theme.

Softly, the last chords of the expiring wail lead us back to the first two measures of this motive, which, repeated from octave to octave upon a pedal-note of E flat, open upon a series of chords in fifths and sixths that ascend to high E sharp like a prayer or the supplication : Can we hope ?

The drama will answer this agonized question.

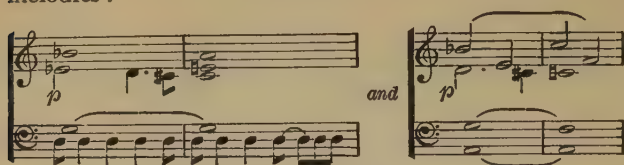
I have tarried long over the prelude because, to a certain extent, it furnishes the key to the work, and also brings out prominently some of the most important themes of the score.

Thus the whole of the first scene (Gurnemanz and the squires) is developed upon the Eucharist motive (I.), the Grail motive (II.), and the Faith motive (IV. and V.). It is a measured recitative, in which the voice has only the solo part ; the real melody is confined to the orchestra, which repeats the typical motives we already know as an incessant commentary to the text.

The first new theme appears at the moment when Gurnemanz recalls the squires to their duty and announces the approach of the sick king's cortège (p. 10, *moderato*). It is a sort of a march motive, the



Let us note two harmonic phrases (pp. 11 and 12) which we will see developed later to become real melodies :

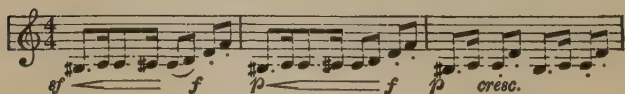


These fragments refer to the *Promise of redemption* which appeared one day in letters of fire on the rim of the Grail. They are repeated continually in the orchestral accompaniment of the dialogue, each time assuming a more precise and characteristic significance.

Suddenly the movement of the music is changed. After a shrill tremolo of the violins, two new and very important themes appear, which relate to Kundry, the enchantress in Klingsor's service, and at the same time the Grail's messenger.

At the moment that the two squires announce her approach (p. 12, *più animato*), a wild and fantastic theme, constructed in halting rhythm, appears in the orchestra :

### X.

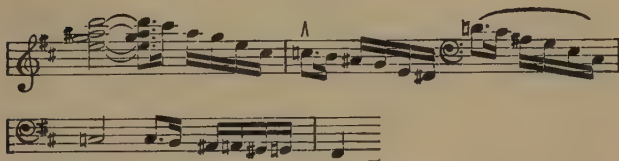


Although it refers at first entirely to Kundry and to

her *roaming* through space, it seems to be descriptive rather than characteristic, for later Wagner makes it apply to Parsifal, when he relates his wanderings through the forests ; and it also reappears in the third act, when the hero tells how he has found the domain of the Grail once more, after having wandered about a long time.

Here, after many changes in the intervals, it is repeated for twelve successive measures, increasing always up to a *fortissimo*, when it ends (p. 14) in a shrill chord, from which comes a chromatic arrangement that unrolls its curves from high D to low F sharp in a compass of three octaves.

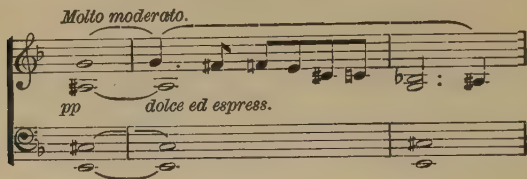
## XI.



This is really the motive of *Kundry* the *demon*. Wagner seems to have sought to characterize by this strange melodic figure the satanic laugh of the enchantress, as well as the curse that rests upon her. During the entire scene that follows, and also in the second act in the great love scene, this arrangement persistently predominates without modification, except that instead of covering three entire octaves, it often stops

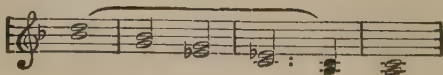


after the first. The sole important change that we must point out is the following (p. 23, *molto moderato*).



As we see, this is a sort of flagging of the melodic figure. It is heard when Amfortas expresses his thanks to Kundry for the balm, which she went to Arabia to seek for him. The poetic idea that actuated the transformation of the theme at this point is extremely delicate. Kundry is the woman who seduced Amfortas, and although the latter does not recognize his enchantress under the rags of the Grail messenger, a secret charm is still at work. Amfortas does not experience, with regard to her, the feelings of instinctive horror, of fear, and of mysterious terror that seized Gurnemanz and the young squires. It seems as though a vague and painful reminiscence of his hour of passion was blended with the expression of his gratitude for Kundry's pious zeal. Thus the music, by its independent and expressive power, evokes a whole train of thought that words could not set forth with sufficient brevity.

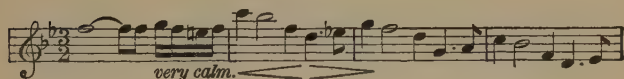
Let us also note the following arrangement in thirds (p. 15, second part):



This seems to apply to Kundry as the Grail messenger, and in opposition to the motive of *Kundry the Demon*, may be called the motive of *Kundry the Beneficent*.

And now appears a fourth new theme in the scene which occupies our minds. It is a melody that is taken up, alternately, by the clarinette and the oboe (p. 17, last part) while the sick king is inhaling the freshness of the dawn and contemplating the morning beauty of the forest.

## XII.



Coming after the pathetic melody that tells of Amfortas's sufferings, it produces an effect of striking contrast: it seems as though a breath, fresh and pure like a breeze from the east, was wafted through the orchestra.

According to the sensations the character experiences and the ideas he expresses, this new melody is associated with the motive of Amfortas's suffering (IX.) and (p. 18, third part, second measure) with the sad phrase that ends the Faith motive (V.). In the narration that follows, fragments of the motive of the Oracle (XVII.), of the Grail motive (II.), and of the motive of Kundry's wanderings (X.) reappear, and thus we reach the *moderato* already indicated, where

the Kundry motive in *ritardando* and the original motive of the enchantress, bring back (pp. 21 and 22) the sad melody of Amfortas (IX.) and the motive of *morning splendor* (XII.), which are now treated in the form of a double canon (p. 23).

The following scene is really the explanation of the piece. There, Gurnemanz explains the mysterious personality of Kundry to the squires who question him. He tells them how the venerable king, Titurel, received the sacred charge of the Grail, and in consequence of what circumstances the lance, confided to Amfortas's care, fell into Klingsor's power.

Like all explanatory scenes, this cannot be performed on the stage without producing a certain impression of its length,\* in spite of all the art that Wagner employs to vary the accent of the narrative. This narrative is written alternately in the form of a real recitative, with simple harmonics in the orchestra to sustain the tonality, and in the form of a recitative aria (that is, after the manner of an aria) where the arrangements of the accompaniment are the animated musical translation and the expressive commentary of what the singer says.

Although barely interrupted by a few replies of the squires and of Kundry, this long monologue is none the

\* "In the theatre everything is lengthy," Theophilus Gautier remarked sadly; and he added: "Patience is necessary in the theatre."

less, musically considered, one of the most interesting pages of the work. No part proclaims with more brilliancy the extraordinary flexibility of the master's hand, the wealth of harmonic resources and of orchestral combinations which he arranged at his pleasure, the ingenuity of his poetic sense, and the delicacy, frequently exquisite, of the sentiment with which he is inspired. In the first twenty pages of the score, all the motives that we have already noted appear in turn, combined differently according to the spirit of the poem, intertwined or separated, with an incomparable ease; some modified, others varied, but all preserving, in essence, the precise meaning and the distinctive character that is peculiar to them. All of the first *animato* part (p. 24) which refers to Kundry's mysterious nature and to her past life, is developed upon the short chromatic arrangement (p. 13) which announces her arrival, upon the halting motive of her *wanderings* (X.), and upon the winding theme that characterizes her demoniacal nature (XI.). The latter finally leads (p. 26, *ritenuto*) up to a series of mysterious harmonics that serve as a transition to the second part of the narrative, which is of an entirely different nature.

In this second part Gurnemanz speaks of Kundry's present life: "Mayhap," says he, "she expiates here an anterior life, and this is, doubtless, why in the service of the order of our knights she devotes herself to works of charity." Wagner first interposes the *Eucharist*

motive (I.), which is then resolved into the harmonics of the *Oracle* motive (XVII.). This is to signify that she too, the Demon, yearns for the Redeemer who will deliver her from Klingsor's curse. This sentiment governs Kundry's whole character ; she struggles perpetually between good and evil. The music again completes and defines here the profound meaning of the words and the secret thoughts of the characters. Gurnemanz, for his part, desires Kundry's redemption, as we are told by the reappearance of the Faith motive (V.), which is slightly varied (tempo 1, *un poco ritenuto*, p. 27) when the old man adds, addressing the young squires : "In doing good, Kundry is helpful to herself."

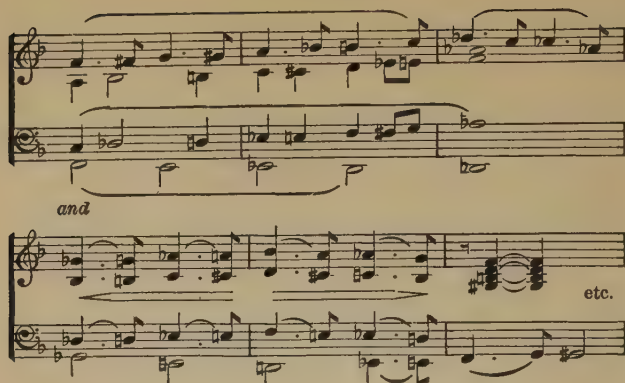
We see that in Wagner's plan the question is not about the musical translation of words, nor even always about the ideas which the character expresses, but that the musical allusion evokes rather the sentiment that makes him speak and act in a certain manner, and thus the symphonic discourse adds shades of infinite delicacy to the real meaning of the words. Doubtless it is difficult, at first sight, to divine all the master's poetic intentions, but what a source of infinite artistic delights is the detailed study of a score thus understood ! and how, in time, the work penetrates one's being ; how it is illuminated with unsuspected clearness when one hears it again by the orchestra, and when one sees it again on the stage !

The remainder of Gurnemanz's narration will offer us new themes which are interesting from more than one standpoint. Having explained to the squires, who surround him, who Kundry was, he reminds them how Titurel found her wrapped in deep slumber, *the magic slumber* which places her in the power of Klingsor, the magician, and makes her the instrument of perdition, as is well known. A chromatic theme that is extremely expressive tells us the nature of this slumber. To Gurnemanz's mind it is connected with all the misfortunes that have weakened the order of the Grail. Besides, Wagner makes the theme reappear several times when allusion is made to these misfortunes. The two ideas are really closely connected. We give here this curious theme, which is played with *sourdine* by the *altos*, whose weakened sharp timbre lends it a strange and mysterious accent (p. 28, *più lento*).

## XIII.



Later, in the quartette, it gives rise to chromatic successions in contrary movement which deserve our attention.



To these piercing harmonics of the strings Gurne-  
manz recalls the work that Klingsor accomplished: the  
seduction of Amfortas and the capture of the spear.  
We hear them again in the orchestra, as a separately  
developed theme, the two fragments of the Eucharist  
motive, already indicated in the prelude (VI. and  
VII.), as applying particularly to the lance; then the  
motive of the *Knights* (VIII.) is given, *diminuendo*, by  
the horns and the trombones.

## XIV.



This last theme thus acquires a boastful movement  
that is very graphic. It applies marvellously to the  
campaign undertaken by Amfortas against Klingsor,  
which was to result so lamentably. These results are

brought to our minds by the motives peculiar to Kundry (XI. and XIII.), combined with the two motives belonging to Amfortas's *wound* and *suffering* (VII. and IX.), and, above all, with the last part of the Eucharist motive (I.), which appears changed in this connection, having an accent of most intense sadness (p. 32, last measure, and p. 33).

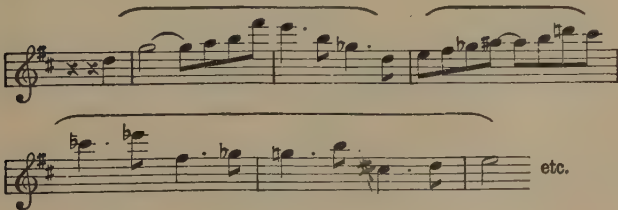
Let us notice yet the expressive variation of the Faith motive (V.), as Gurnemanz recalls the delivery of the Grail to Titurel (*solemn*, p. 35).

XV.



From this point, Gurnemanz's monologue becomes exalted and larger in movement. It is now a broad and magnificent chant in which we meet two new and important themes. First (p. 38), the Klingsor motive (clarinette and bassoon in unison):

XVI.

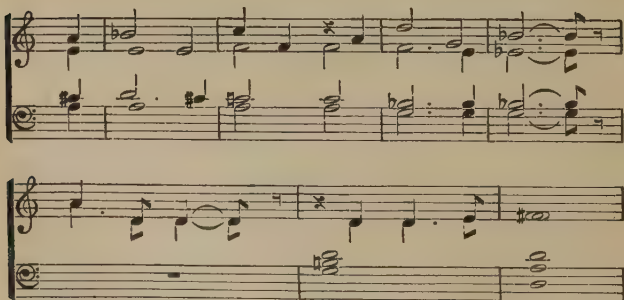




It is combined with the motive of Kundry's slumber (XIII.), with the Grail motive (II.), and then with the Demon motive (XI.), which latter leads us to the entrancing succession of harmonics forming the Flower-maidens' motive (p. 49, *più moderato*), which will be treated of in the second act.

The second theme appears after one part of the narrative which is alternately animated and quiet, and during which the majority of the themes already known, occur, particularly that of the Grail, richly harmonized but played quite *pianissimo* (p. 43). This second theme appears at the moment when Gurnemanz informs the young men of the oracle that refers to the expected redeemer. The phrase is as follows :

## XVII.



Played by the wooden wind instruments and sustained by the horns, it takes hold upon one by its penetrating and solemn accent, and by the strangeness of its harmonic constitution. In the space of eight

measures it modulates from A major to F, passes through the chord of E flat, and finally ends in the key of D. The melodic arrangement, which is very simple, is really a minor fifth (B flat E) followed by two true fifths (C-F, D-G, A-D).

These strange harmonics, which have been indicated from the beginning of Gurnemanz's scene, and frequently repeated in fragments during the course of his narrative, produce an extraordinary effect when, at last, they pass from the orchestra over to the voices of the young squires, who repeat, in mystic terror, the oracle which the old knight has revealed to them. Let us notice, too, that the first ensemble of voices occurs at this point, which fact contributes toward impressing this theme, in itself very characteristic, more deeply upon the memory. This ensemble, however, is very short, and consists of only five measures. It forms the conclusion of Gurnemanz's long narrative, and at the same time it finishes the exposition of the piece. From now on the drama can move more rapidly, and indeed, after Parsifal's arrival, everything becomes brighter and more animated on the stage.

Parsifal's entrance is striking. Hardly has the last harmony of the Oracle motive died away like a prayer, when, without any transition, the horns sound *fortissimo* (p. 45) the characteristic fanfare, that is like the musical covering under which the hero will appear until the end of the work. At first it is only a fragment of the

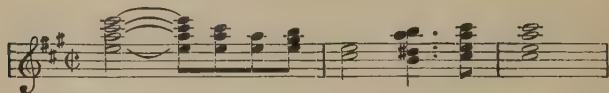
theme, interspersed by rapid phrases on the violins and flutes, in which the Swan motive from "Lohengrin" may be recognized, accompanying the cries of the knights in pursuit of the youth whose arrow has just wounded one of the birds of the sacred lake. Upon Parsifal's first reply, the entire theme is heard :

## XVIII.

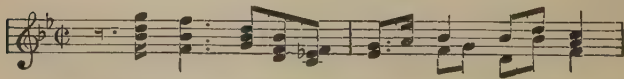


Of noble character, because of its rich harmonics in chivalrous movement, and because of its proud and graceful rhythm, this phrase depicts the hero's figure marvellously well.

It seems to me interesting to compare it with two similar phrases which characterize two other Wagnerian characters—first Lohengrin :



Then Walther von Stolzing in "Die Meistersinger : "



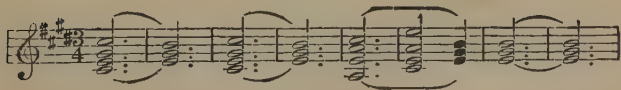
These bear a striking family resemblance among themselves, although differing essentially by their melodic arrangement. This analogy is perfectly justifiable in the case of Lohengrin. The musical and poetic con-

nection between Walther and Parsifal is less apparent ; but then note how much more familiar is the movement of the motive of Walther, who is a character of real life. The most curious fact is that, of all Wagnerian heroes, he who approaches Parsifal most nearly in character and bearing, namely Siegfried, is precisely the one who is furthest removed from him musically. Nothing in the motives of the Tetralogy, that relates to Siegfried, seems able to apply to Parsifal.

Another observation, à propos of the latter's theme, is that we find in it two consecutive fifths which might shock purists, but which will doubtless, one day, be added to the already long list of the fifths of celebrated composers.

But let us go on. The reproaches which the venerable Gurnemanz addresses to the youth give rise to an exquisite musical page (*più lento*, p. 49), in which will be noted some interesting variations of the Faith motive, the reappearance of the motive of Morning splendor, and this time very clearly recognizable, the harmonics of the Swan in "Lohengrin," enveloped in the arpeggios of the harps and violins.

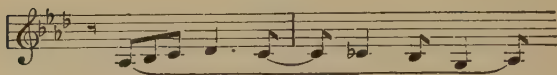
### XIX.



Then, as Parsifal feels himself overcome by emotion, the following phrase, which has been heard already sev-

eral times, and which is nothing but a part of the Eucharist motive, somewhat changed, is outlined more clearly :

## XX.



This is, properly speaking, the motive of Pity, and perhaps it was this phrase, of an intensely elegiac nature, that Wagner noted down in Zürich on that Good-Friday, when, for the first time in many years, he remembered Parsifal, and seemed to hear “the sigh of most profound pity which once resounded from the cross at Golgotha.” On the whole, this theme is, together with the Faith, the Grail, and the Parsifal motives, the most important in the score. It appears everywhere, so much so that it would be wearisome to note all its recurrences. Whenever the subject of pity toward animals is mentioned, or for knights in distress, for the sufferings of Amfortas, or for repentant Kundry, this sad melody interjects its plaintive note in the orchestral commentary. In the present scene it is frequently used as an ending to the Parsifal motive. At the sight of the dying swan, the hero, for the first time, feels himself overcome by a sentiment he does not know ; it is compassion. If his attitude did not say this, the music would express it clearly enough.

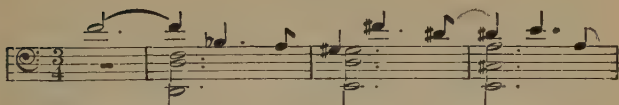
Without dwelling any longer on the scene of Parsi-

fal's examination, which is developed almost altogether upon the following fragmentary motive :



to which are joined other themes now well known, let us pass on to Parsifal's first narrative. It is introduced by the following motive, played by the violoncellos, and it evokes the memory of his mother Herzeleide :

XXI.



The foundation of this account is furnished by the Parsifal motive and by the Wandering motive (X.) first applied to Kundry. It takes here the following form : which



continues for some time in the accompaniment ; it is only interrupted by the motive of Kundry, the Demon, as she interposes and finishes Parsifal's story. The scene ends with the recurrence of the Herzeleide motive (XXI.), as the latter's death is mentioned, and with the reappearance of Kundry's magic Slumber motive (XIII.), and of the Klingsor motive (XVI.), passing through interesting

changes in the Parsifal motive, to the *molto vivace* (p. 60), and from the Grail motive to the *moderato* (p. 61).

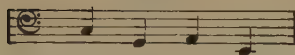
We have now reached the principal part of the first act, the great temple scene. It is a grand part, unprecedented on the stage, and the most hostile criticism would not find a fault in it; it is an incomparable hymn of ecstasy and mystic love, before which analysis pauses impotent. No description can give an idea of the majesty, the grandeur, and the impressiveness of this broad and serene music, in which the flood of melody flows without interruption, and with extraordinary copiousness and wealth.

But we must limit ourselves to noticing only the essential parts of this magnificent finale. The musical elements that compose it might be divided into two categories, the human motives and the divine or mystic motives.

The former refer to the knights, to Parsifal, Gurnemanz, and Amfortas, and are either graphic or pathetic; the latter, relating to the worship of the Grail and to Faith, have the serenity of accent and the fervor of the most beautiful church canticles.

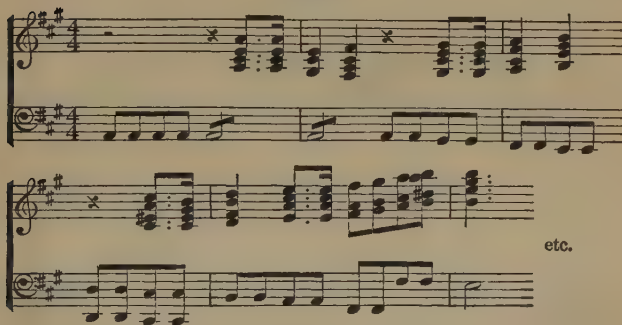
The symphonic composition that accompanies the transformation scene is built entirely upon the motives belonging to the first class, and we will indicate them here. There is first the motive of the Bells, consisting of four notes descending by intervals of fourths, which are given alternately by bells on the stage, and by the bass-viol and double-basses in the orchestra:

XXII.



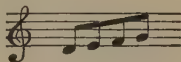
These four notes, forming a restrained bass, give rise to the following march motive :

XXIII.

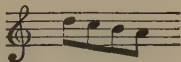


which serves as a characteristic accompaniment both for Parsifal's and Gurnemanz's ascent to the temple, and later for the entrance (p. 69) and the exit of the knights in going to and from the holy office.

From the beginning of the symphonic introduction to the temple scene, this theme is almost invariably joined to the Grail motive (II.), a fragment of which in the following arrangement :



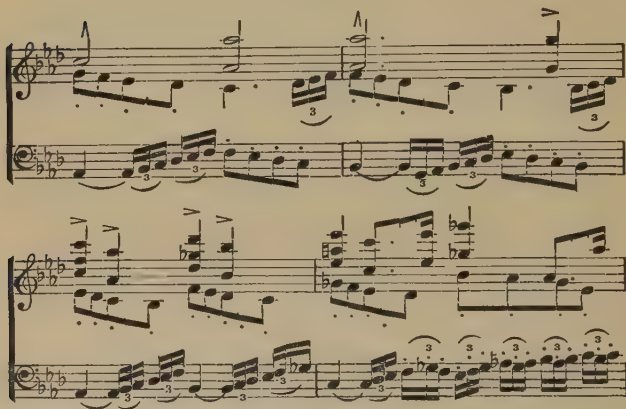
and its reverse :





have an important part in the course of the development. Especially the reverse Wagner turns here to account. The strings play the motive in detached notes, the bass-viols execute an imitation with vigor, while the wind instruments give out a counterpoint in broad, sustained notes :

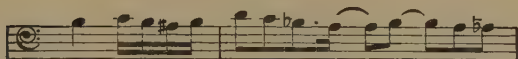
## XXIV.



Immediately afterward a new theme rises, which Mr. von Wolzogen (doubtless after Wagner's direction) calls the Saviour's lament (*Heilandsklage*). While duly respecting the name given to this motive, I must remark that it does not refer exclusively to the Saviour ; it also expresses Amfortas's repentance, for later it accompanies the sick king's long supplication, as he implores forgiveness and begs Titurel to replace him, the unworthy servant of the Grail, in his office. It appears

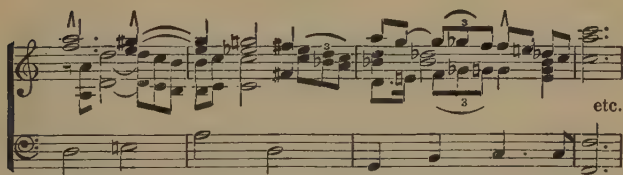
at first *fortissimo* in D flat (p. 66, second part, second measure), but dies away at once to an expressive *pianissimo*, which come to a conclusion with the elegiac arrangement already mentioned. (See VII.)

XXV.



For five measures this arrangement ascends chromatically and *crescendo*, until it terminates a second time in the Saviour motive in D,

XXVI.



then, immediately afterward, louder still, in F. The harmony then passes through the most varied tonalities, while on the stage the trombones repeat the first part of motive I., which we have already seen serving as a morning reveille at the beginning of the act. The whole ends on the note C, long sustained by trumpets and trombones, and serving to introduce the Bell motive, heard now for the first time, and which will continue in the orchestra in combination with the march motive.

Parsifal and Gurnemanz have entered the temple, and

they now take part in the march of the knights, who go to the places assigned them at the sacred board. The choral part of the temple scene begins at this point :

For our holy office  
Prepared day by day, etc.\*

This chorus is a simple unison of male voices (bass) founded upon an almost commonplace melody, which is constantly ennobled by the orchestra, where the Bell motive (XXII.) and the March motive (XXIII.) continue until the reappearance of the Grail motive, which forms at the same time the conclusion and the transition.

The second group of choristers, consisting of youths (tenors and altos), then begin their part (p. 72). These voices, clearer and more penetrating than the former, sing the phrase called the *Saviour's lament* (XXVI.) exactly, with a few modifications that are rendered almost necessary by the prosody of the German text. If this melody, remarkable for its descending chromatics in thirds, possesses an inherent character of intense sadness, it now attains, when taken up by these voices, a strength of emphasis in expressing suffering, of which it would be difficult to find the equivalent in music. The chorus repeats it twice in the same key and two short phrases, of three measures each, conclude it. Notice the interludes that separate the versicles : they

\* See text in the chapter on The Drama.

consist of the Bell motive and the March motive played in syncopation by the strings. Finally, the Grail motive, in the orchestra, forms the ending of this part (p. 74), and prepares us at the same time for what is to follow, that is to say, for the mystic part.

This occupies the whole of the second picture of the temple scene, only broken in upon by the agonized supplications of the sick king. The Faith motive (V.) now resounds from the height of the cupola, where it is sung by children's voices :

“Now faith revives,  
From heaven descends the white messenger.”

This is the communion, the divine ecstasy of beings whom the same faith envelops in its light, and who are now but one thought, one heart, and one soul.

Thus we are constantly elevated. Upon entering the temple, we first heard the knights sing their canticle, which is as commonplace as their faith ; from another region, we then heard the Saviour's lament resounding. Above that we find ourselves in a region superior to humanity, in the spaces where “sight is unrestrained,” as it is said in the second part of Goethe's “Faust ;” in the ethereal plains where all suffering ceases, where all is harmony and repose.

Is this Heaven ? And are these the voices of angels, who, shrouded in blue mists, come to pour consoling emotions upon us ? Each one is at liberty to hear it

thus. But this is certain, that Wagner must have recalled at this point both the reveries of Swedenborg\* and the dénouement of Goethe's "Faust," where we find this same tripartite division of the world, the *lower region* (Pater profundus), the *middle region* (Pater seraphicus), and the *upper region*, the cleanest cell (Doctor Marianus). Combine these ideas with those we have noted in another chapter with regard to Wagner's profound admiration for the Buddhist philosophy,† and this Faith motive which the calm voices of children

\* Swedenborg, the celebrated naturalist and theosophist of Sweden (1688-1772), who pretended to have had divine revelations and to have conversed with souls. In his numerous mystic writings, particularly in his *Heavenly Annals* and his *New Jerusalem*, he describes the other world, where souls resume their terrestrial life but in a perfectly beatific state. In the immaterial world he recognized three subdivisions, which corresponded to the three subdivisions of the material world. The heavens had three beatific spheres just as in the terrestrial world; according to his philosophy, there are three senses: the natural, the spiritual, and the celestial. Founder of a new church, Swedenborg left numerous disciples in Northern Germany, in Sweden, in England, and even in North America.

† See the chapter entitled "The Genesis." Buddhism also recognizes analogous subdivisions of Heaven, but makes them four in number. They are illuminated by their own inherent light, without sun or moon. First comes the "Heaven of Desire," where the Buddhas of the future are awaiting the moment of their last reincarnation to save the world; higher than this is the "Heaven of Pure Forms," where the deities of light exist; above this is the "Heaven of pure and virtuous Beings," and the fourth and last Heaven is that of the "Redeemed." This last one is the Heaven of those Buddhas who are no longer subjected to metamorphosis and who are freed from conscience and misery.

sing without any accompaniment—the orchestra would be too earthly—this broad and impressive melody will become for you the restful and harmonious song of those souls who, in the tender rays of pure light, have ceased to be divided, and now find themselves united in the same sentiment of universal love.

Musical analysis should limit itself to noting a composer's methods; but with Wagner it is not allowable to forget the poet and the philosopher for a single instant. If this Faith motive, as well as the Oracle motive (XVII.) further on, both of which have been heard several times, reappear now, sung by children's voices from on high—that is, so that the audience hear it as from afar, and with a recoil that etherealizes the sound, if I may say so—it is not done, as one might believe, with the sole desire of producing a new effect, such as that with which Wagner had experimented in his “Love feast of the Apostles.”\* Assuredly, the artist has the right to use all the methods whose bearing he knows. But Wagner was not the man to occupy himself solely with so paltry an aim. His thought was higher, and in making this children's chorus come

\* Das Liebesmahl der Apostel, a male chorus with orchestra composed in 1843. In this work there is a chorus announcing the advent of the Holy Ghost, which Wagner arranged to be sung from the top of a dome. This mechanical contrivance may well have been suggested to him by the antiphonal choirs that sang responsively from the choir-loft, and the rood-loft in use in the Roman churches in the seventeenth century. It will suffice to recall the *Improperia* and the *Miserere* of Allegri and of Baj.

from an airy distance, he wanted more than a material effect; he obeyed a very beautiful idea, such as we have rapidly set forth above. And the effect of this chorus is so powerful on the stage only because the method here is absolutely justified by the essence of the thought itself. Musically, this mystic chorus is treated in the form of a four-part choral, the soprano has the air and the altos follow in imitation; the two other parts (second and third sopranos) constitute independent, intermediate voices. When the principal theme which we have cited (V.) has been played, the bass begins its reverse, which is then taken up imitatively, for two measures, by the soprano, and this brings back the first theme in its natural form. Finally, the string quartette takes up, in turn, very softly, the first arrangement of the motive which ends with the chords of the Grail motive (the closing march in sixths), while the horns define for the last time the Bell motive, in the bass.

Now a long silence supervenes; Titurel's voice is heard from his tomb, in a short recitative punctuated by short taps on the kettle-drums in the key of E flat.\*

This leads us back to the earth. Amfortas, lying on his bed of pain, tortured by suffering and remorse, refuses to officiate and to uncover the Grail. The motive

\* When this is performed in a concert, this recitative as well as Amfortas's scene are usually suppressed. Wagner himself gave the direction for this. From the *più lento* (p. 76) they pass on to the *più lento* (p. 87).



of the "Saviour's lament" (XXVI.), to which are joined the Kundry motive (XI.), the motive of Suffering (IX.), the Eucharist motive (I.), and the Grail motive (II.), form the basis of a marvellous symphonic commentary, on which a long scene is developed, sung now in the form of a recitative, now as an air. It would be impossible to notice all the ingenious modifications which the different themes cited above undergo in their connections. In the conclusion of this extremely pathetic part, the Slumber motive (XIII.) also reappears and is resolved, at the paroxysm of pain, into the enlarged theme of the Saviour's lament.

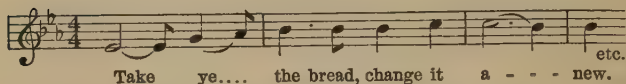
Then from the summit of the cupola the mystic voices sound anew, singing, this time, the consolatory hymn of the Oracle (XVII.), to which a choral recitative on the Grail motive, sung by the knights, responds from below. At this moment the servants, at Titurel's command, uncover the Grail, and the Eucharist motive (I.) is sung, this time by the voices in the cupola (altos and tenors) in unison, sustained by a simple tremolo of the basses, with the modulations and the arpeggios which we have already heard in the prelude. When this is finished (p. 90), the motive of the Saviour's lament in its full development (XXVI. and XXV.), after that the Grail motive (II.), surrounded by long arpeggios on the harp, are joined to the motive of the sacred Spear (VII.).

The Grail has been reinclosed in its shrine, and the knights partake of the holy feast. During this time,



the voices from above intone a new melody of a most striking breadth and impressiveness, which is sustained by the throbbing of triplets on the wood wind instruments, upon a sustained bass, which descends by connected degrees throughout one whole octave.

## XXVII.



We give here only the first part of the melody. Its second portion is formed by a fragment, already given, of the primitive theme of the Eucharist (VI.), repeated twice in succession and terminating in a simple cadence. The entire melody is taken up, a second time, by the alto voices in unison.

Thus ends the mystic portion of this sublime finale. The vigorous voices of the knights now begin their part on the Bell motive, singing in unison a new melody derived from the Eucharist and the Grail motives. The Bell motive, in the accompaniment, is transformed gradually, while still retaining its sturdy march rhythm, and becomes a very simple but most interesting counter-theme to the part that is being sung. The whole terminates with the Grail motive taken up successively and repeated from octave to octave by all the voices (knights, youths, altos, children), which have thus far been heard separately, and the union of which

produce a finale of touching grandeur to this marvelous picture.

The scene is not ended, however. While the first violins take up the Faith motive, which now reappears in descending movement through all the groups of instruments, the knights exchange the kiss of peace, and Amfortas's cortège slowly withdraws, followed by the host of templars, servants, and children. The symphonic composition which accompanies this scenic action is an admirable combination of motives already known.

The act closes with the very brief scene between Gurnemanz and Parsifal. Let us notice here the alteration in the Oracle motive (*altos*) to express Gurnemanz's deception (p. 100), and, later, in the Parsifal motive (muffled horns). When Parsifal has left the temple, and Gurnemanz pensively re-enters it, a single alto voice repeats the Oracle motive, and in the distance are heard the voices from the cupola singing the Grail motive very softly. And upon this poetic conclusion, the curtain falls.

The second act, as we have said elsewhere, transports us to entirely different surroundings; it places us in the midst of enchantments, first dark and diabolic, and later voluptuous and irresistibly captivating.

In the musical analysis of this second portion of the drama, we will be allowed to go much more rapidly.

First, because a goodly number of the motives that appear in it are already well known to us, and secondly, because the system of the intertwining of motives having now been explained, it is useless and would prove wearisome to notice all their combinations. It will, then, suffice to give the new themes, and to note here and there certain peculiarities that are worthy of attention.

The prelude is a highly colored composition of rapid movement and violent character, which is to be explained by the fact that it serves as introduction to the scene of Kundry's evocation by Klingsor. The latter only appears in this one scene and again at the very end of the act.

Four motives, already known, chiefly form the basis of the scene of Kundry's evocation. They are :

1. The Klingsor motive (XVI.), which makes itself heard from the beginning of the prelude and which, during the entire course of the picture, predominates in the orchestra, either in its entirety or in fragments. It is generally confined to the clarinette, the horn, and partly to the oboe.

2. The Magic Slumber motive pertaining to Kundry, which, with its strange succession of harmonics, has already been heard in the first act (XIII.).

3. The motive of Kundry, the Demon (XI.).

4. The motive of the Saviour's Lament (XXVI.), which seems to apply here to Kundry's longing for redemption. It is, however, not the full theme that we

hear but only the chromatic thirds given *pianissimo* by the clarinettes, while the strings set forth the ultimate form of the Klingsor motive as a counter-theme :

## XXVIII.



The combination of the two themes is most ingenious ; it seems to express Kundry's dual life, one of which turns to good, the other to evil.

These four themes are the essential elements of the symphonic woof. They are not the only ones, however, from the beginning of the act (p. 106) the motive of the Oracle reappears. Klingsor knows the promise that has appeared around the Grail, and it is just to seduce the innocent stripling that he evokes Kundry. The same theme undergoes, later, some very curious rhythmic modifications (pp. 117 and 122), at the juncture when Klingsor commands the enchantress to exercise her powers upon Parsifal.

## XXIX.

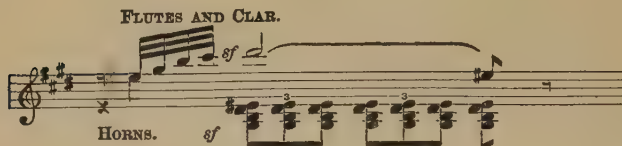


The motive of Amfortas's Suffering (IX.) and the Grail motive also appear at the end of Klingsor's re-

cital, reminding Kundry of her "former campaigns" against the Grail knights.

In short the only new theme in the first scene is the following :

## XXX.



which predominates during Klingsor's imprecations when Kundry jeers at the eunuch because of his easily practised virtue. These imprecations, an energetic allegro of infernal accent and of cutting irony marvelously sustained, are interrupted (p. 119) by the Parsifal fanfare, which is combined (p. 120) with a halting motive which we will see further developed in the following scene, and which seems to characterize the confusion of the knights running at the magician's call to defend the castle against the advancing assailant (XXXI.). The end of this picture is developed almost entirely upon the motives of Kundry's laughter, of Klingsor, and of the Magic Slumber, in a continually accelerated movement, until a *vivace* is reached.

In short, this vigorous part, the violent tone of which is the result of the persistent use of the chords of the dominant seventh, offers few difficulties.

We are now in the enchanted garden of the Castle of

Perdition. The tumult in the orchestra gradually subsides, as the Flower maidens, rushing in, approach Parsifal and their first fears are allayed at the sight of him. Their fears are expressed by the following arrangement :

XXXI.



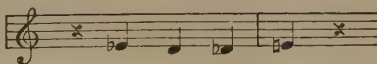
We mentioned this motive before, and we will find it again at the close of the scene between Kundry and Parsifal.

It continues here during six measures, after which a second motive appears :

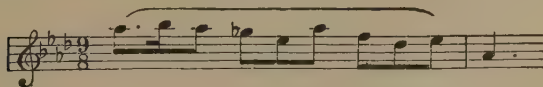
XXXII.



or, simpler,



which we may call the Lament of the Flower maidens. The following arrangement predominates in the accompaniment for a long time :



combined subsequently with the Fear motive (XXXI.).

The whole then terminates, after some interesting developments, in the Parsifal fanfare which rings out proudly and boldly, being repeated two different times (p. 137, last measure, and 143).

By successive decompositions of the harmonics and arrangements of the three themes we have just given, Wagner leads the audience, almost insensibly, to the principal scene of the act, to the scene of seduction. It opens with a chorus somewhat like a lullaby or a waltz to be sung, voluptuous and caressing in nature, by which you are enveloped by all the softness, all the intoxicating charm of woman.

This piece is developed upon a moderate rhythm in three-quarter time. The melody is graceful and of great simplicity, while the continued successions of sixths give to the whole the voluptuous character that the situation demands, and it seizes the audience so much the more because the entire beginning of the act is treated in a sombre and violent scale.

Wagner separates the female chorus into four groups, of three voices each, dividing the sung responses between the various voices of each group, so that we have twelve entirely different vocal parts, and only occasionally does one voice in each group sing the same part in unison with a voice in another group. Despite the extreme complexity and the confusion of voices, the tone of this chorus, from beginning to end, is a delight to the ear. The execution, to be sure, exacts not only sing-

ers whose voices are absolutely true and well pitched, but who are also excellent musicians.

The main theme is conceived thus :

XXXIII.

SOLI AND CHORUS.

Come ! come ! O sweet mas - ter, come.

This musical block contains two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time, with lyrics 'Come ! come ! O sweet mas - ter, come.' The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in the same key and time, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Between each strophe of the chorus, two soloists execute this phrase :

XXXIV.

This block shows a single staff with a short melodic phrase in G major and 3/4 time. It consists of a quarter note G, followed by a quarter note A, then a quarter note B, and finally a quarter note G. The phrase is marked with a slur and a '3' above it, indicating a triplet.

which passes over to the orchestra in the accompaniment to Parsifal's short replies, and afterward becomes the principal motive of the soloists of the chorus. Then a third arrangement is added :

XXXV.

etc.

This block contains two staves. The top staff is a piano accompaniment in G major and 3/4 time, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The bottom staff is a vocal line in the same key and time, featuring a steady eighth-note bass line and trills (marked 'tr') in the right hand. The phrase ends with 'etc.'

the springing movement of which expresses to perfec-



tion the maidens' pique, and the blandishments with which they overwhelm the innocent youth, who repulses them. These various themes will reappear later, at different times during the scene between Kundry and Parsifal (pp. 171 and 203).

The following scene is directly connected with this delicious intermezzo, and is masterly introduced into the midst of the pretty babble of the Flower maidens, by the two calls which Kundry, as yet invisible, gives out, upon the last two notes of the Oracle motive :

## XXXVI.



The effect of these three notes, a fifth followed by a minor third, is prodigious. This voice, still distant, which rises at once imperiously and seductively, commands the attention immediately. Doubtless the scenic picture here counts for much in the impression produced, but still more important is the extreme simplicity of the means employed to affect the mind so strongly. The notation of the word Parsifal rings in your ear ; it takes possession of you ; it is no longer possible to free yourself from it, so intense has been the impression received.

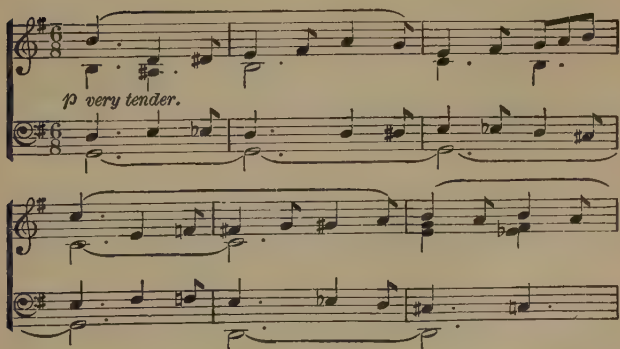
Parsifal ! At this name the hero begins to remember. Thus his mother called him, and the *Herzeleide* motive

(XXI.) is delicately given by the orchestra. Fragments of the Oracle motive (XVII.) and of the Spear motive (VII.) are now heard, for Parsifal wants to regain this spear, and Kundry is to make him forget it; then the Magic Slumber motive resounds (XIII.) as, in reply to the youth, Kundry tells him: "Far, far from here is my country! and I have seen much!" This entire dialogue, taken in all, is only a transition to lead to Kundry's grand narrative, as she begins her work of seduction.

This recital opens with a sort of cavatina, very slow and very quiet in movement, but of intense expression and penetrating charm.

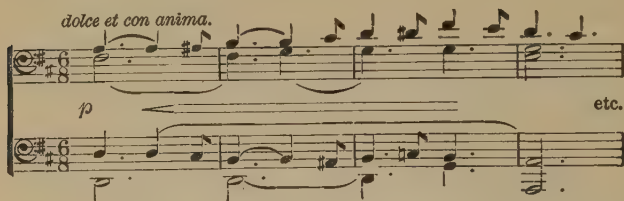
## XXXVII.

MOLTO MODERATO ET TRANQUILLO.



This delicate melody shows a very striking analogy to

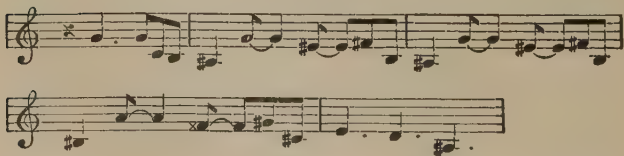
that which is developed in the orchestra during Siegfried's reveries, as follows :



The melodic arrangement is almost the same, and the harmonic progression offers a strong resemblance. The sentiments, moreover, are almost alike. In "Siegfried," the young hero muses about his mother, about the father he has never known, and he questions the dwarf who reared him on the subject. In this drama, Parsifal listens with emotion to the story of his mother which Kundry is about to repeat.

This melody continues in the orchestra for forty-five measures, developing in periods of six or eight measures, and is connected, by a short transition, with the Herzeleide motive ( $\frac{9}{8}$  time, p. 117) which is slightly changed in its rhythmic constitution :

### XXXVIII.



Then a second theme, relating to Herzeleide, appears

(p. 117, *poco più ritenuto*), which is at once extremely expressive, mournful, and tender.

## XXXIX.

The musical score for XXXIX is written for a full orchestra. The top staff is for Strings, Oboes, and Violins. The bottom staff is for Bassoon and Cellos. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 9/8. The score begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a *poco più ritenuto* marking. The melody is primarily carried by the strings and woodwinds, with dynamic markings of piano (p) and forte (sf). The score ends with a fermata over the final notes.

It refers both to the tears shed by Herzeleide as she beheld her son going from her, and to the emotion that seizes Parsifal as he listens to the story of his mother's sad death; for the same theme reappears when the distracted Parsifal, mad with despair, cries, "My mother! My mother! what have I done? To have forgotten thee, thee, my dearly beloved!"

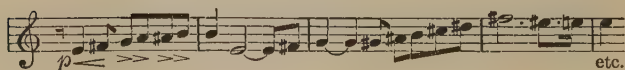
The whole first part of this scene is treated with a deftness of touch, a delicacy of sentiment, and a charm that are incomparable. Parsifal's outburst of sorrow, which reaches the most sublime pathos, introduces us to another class of ideas. Kundry has been waiting for this moment of supreme grief, and she now folds the lad in a voluptuous embrace. At this point, numerous familiar motives throng together in combinations that produce the highest dramatic effect. Just as the kiss is given, we hear the motive of Herzeleide's tears, played

by the altos and the violoncellos, sustained by sweet harmonies on the wind instruments, and immediately followed by the Curse motive ; then follows the Pity motive, and finally the motives referring to Amfortas's suffering (VI., VII., and IX.) with which is also blended the chromatic arrangement of Kundry the Demon. All that Parsifal experiences, the perturbation of his faculties, the sorrowful emotion aroused by his mother's name, the awakening of his conscience, and the terrible vision of Amfortas's sin, all this is depicted by the music with incomparable accuracy of tone and force of expression.

It is impossible not to be powerfully moved when, at last, as Parsifal falls on his knees, the calm harmonics of the Grail and Eucharist motives suddenly rise above the fragments of these pathetic phrases.

Once repulsed, Kundry returns to the prey about to escape her, and insane with mingled rage and malice, appears passionate, suppliant, and ironic in turn. Not one shade escapes the musician. Let us notice this new theme (pp. 190, 192, and 199) :

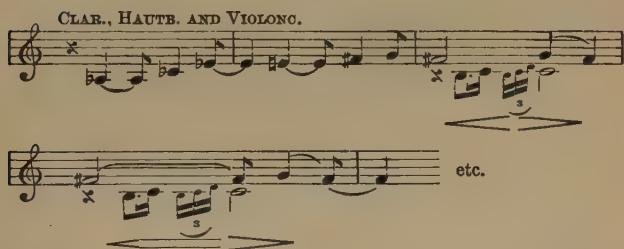
## XL.



which tells us of the Demon's amorous entreaty. Parsifal repulses her violently, and Kundry then seeks to

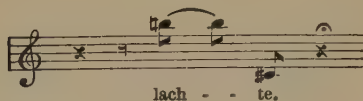
soften him. "Oh, that thou didst know the curse that weighs upon me!" She then tells him how she laughed when she saw the Saviour sinking beneath his cross. After a roll of the bass-drums, the orchestra gives out the Eucharist motive, altered thus:

XLII.



Mr. von Wolzogen calls it in this form the Cross motive. Let us also note the curious notation of the word *lachte*, I laughed.

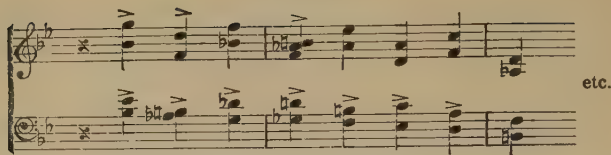
XLII.



to which succeeds the motive of the sacred spear, as Kundry says: "And his gaze fell upon me." What a marvellous association of ideas!

Then another new theme accompanies Kundry's words: "Let me weep on thy breast."

## XLIH.



We shall find it again in the third act (first scene), as an accompaniment of the by-play of the repentant Kundry.

Let us note a very poetic inspiration in Parsifal's reply ; as the youth, after having alluded to the distress of the community of the Grail and to his own mission, pronounces the words : " But who knows the source of redemption ? " the Faith motive is heard in the orchestra.

Kundry resumes her rôle. She throws herself upon Parsifal, trying to encircle him with her arms. At the same time recur the harmonics and the melodic arrangements of the Flower maidens scene, of the demonic laughter, of the Curse motive, and, lastly, of the Wanderer motive (X.), in which Kundry condemns Parsifal to continue his wanderings for many a day, and then summons Klingsor to her aid.

Just as the latter hurls the sacred spear at Parsifal, we notice, in the orchestra, a strange *glissando* effect on the harps (two octaves).

Then, when Parsifal traces the sign of the cross with the spear, the Grail motive, considerably enlarged and sustained by the tremolo of the violins, resounds with magnificent effect from the brasses. At once, the

Castle of Perdition is swallowed up in the midst of a terrific noise, in which we recognize the Klingsor motive reversed; then the lament of the faded and fallen Flower maidens rises for the last time, much enlarged and very slowly :

## XLIV.

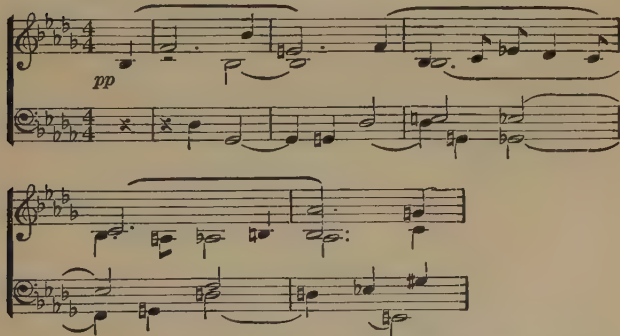


like a last supplication, a final appeal to pity, and to redeeming compassion :

The third act opens with sombre tones. The community of the Grail is plunged in distress and *desolation*. Mournfully the strings give out the following motive, which depicts the lamentable condition of the order :

## XLV.

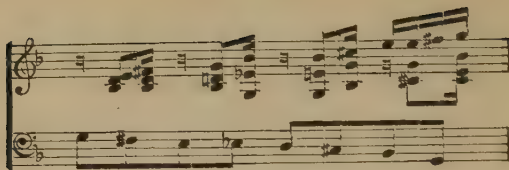
*molto lento.*



During all the first part of the act this theme will continue, emphasized by a second theme :

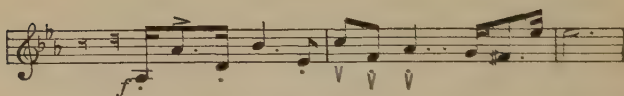


## XLVI.



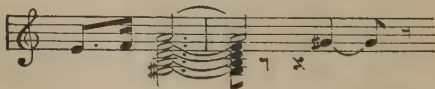
which also appears in the prelude and which refers to Kundry, vanquished, crushed, and weary. In it we recognize a variation of the Wandering motive (X.), which also applies, as we know, to Parsifal's errantry. It is therefore, in the prelude and in the first scene of the third act, connected with the Oracle motive, with the following change of rhythm :

## XLVII.



As the curtain rises, we first hear the simplified motive of the lament of the Flower maidens (XXXII.) and the Klingsor and Curse motives (bass, clarinette, and English horn), which symbolize Kundry, hidden under the bushes, whose moaning reaches Gurnemanz's ear :

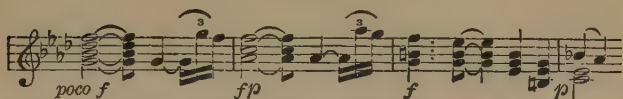
## XLVIII.



The old man calls to her : " Rise, Kundry, winter

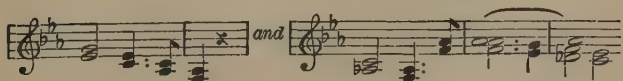
has fled. Spring is at hand." In the orchestra resounds a fresh and charming motive which is the one beam of light in this sombre symphonic picture :

## XLIX.



Read attentively all that follows : it is a marvel of expressive music. Kundry is lying here, insensible, a prey to the magic slumber, knowing not, when she comes to herself, who has awakened her, Klingsor or Gurnemanz, whom, just at first, she does not recognize ; then having come to her senses, she finds herself, weak and disconsolate, in the domain of the Grail. All this is told us by the music, without the utterance of a single word, by the mere combination of fragments of the motives of Klingsor, of the demoniacal Laughter, of Pity, and of the Grail, which accompany and explain the sinful woman's mute gestures. When she is fully awake, the only words she succeeds in pronouncing, in a tone of supplication, are : "To serve, to serve !" which these delicate arrangements in thirds on the clarinettes accompany :

## L.



This is really the motive of the *repentant* Kundry.

It should be observed that these two words: "To serve, to serve!" are absolutely the only ones which Kundry has to say in all of the third act. Although she is constantly on the stage, she neither sings nor speaks; from thenceforth her rôle is simply a pantomime. This is assuredly an audacious, and probably an unique experiment on the stage.

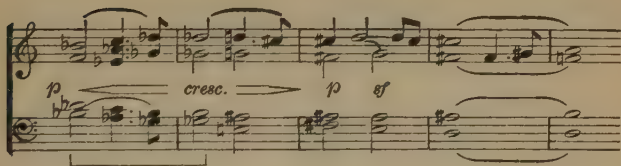
Poetically, the sinner's speechlessness is justified: what could she say? Contrition is not loquacious. The former Demon, humble for the future, shows sufficiently by her attitude of humility the change wrought in her, and the music expresses more eloquently than words could do, the profound repentance and ardent desire for redemption that now animate her.

From a dramatic stand-point, Wagner, it is true, has deprived himself of an important musical resource in making his principal interpreter mute during an entire act. Is this to be regretted? I do not think so. Wagner must have given this subject deep reflection, and if he suppressed Kundry vocally, it was because he had good reasons for so doing. The fact is, we do not see clearly what he could have made her sing. All the actions of this Magdalen explain themselves perfectly without a spoken word. Speech was therefore unnecessary. On the whole, this mutism of the penitent adds to the characteristics of the personage, while it has the advantage of leaving the musician complete liberty to note, in an infinitely more delicate way, by his expres-

sive and speaking motives, all the shades of sentiment experienced by this troubled soul, that is moving toward the light of Faith.

In the short recital that follows (by Gurnemanz) it is important to call attention to a very interesting harmonic succession (p. 223, first measure) which reappears several times in the course of the act.

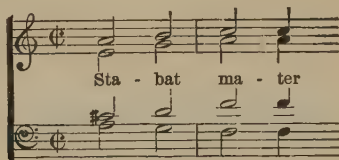
LI.



In Wagner's thought, it evidently applies to the idea of holiness. It occurs here for the first time, when Gurnemanz asks if the change of manner he has observed in Kundry is not the work of Good Friday. Later (p. 226) the same harmonics are repeated twice by the orchestra, when the idea of Good Friday calls them up; again (p. 240) when Gurnemanz alludes to the sacred mission Parsifal is to fulfil; and lastly (p. 270, last part) they are blended with the Parsifal fanfare as he is about to raise the sacred lance.

What renders the harmonic succession of the first measure (a) so characteristic, is the absence of any note common to the three chords following one another,

which are three perfect chords juxtaposed, instead of being relative, the bass of which descends by connected intervals. Successions of this kind are frequent in the old church music of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Wagner seems to have recalled more particularly Palestrina's "Stabat Mater," which begins with a *harmonic* succession that is entirely like it :

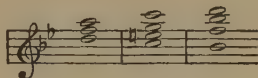


The fifth, evidently intended, in the second measure, also recalls the harmonic system of the great Italian master, by their austere and mournful character.

This reminiscence is easily explained, if we remember that at the time when Wagner was leader of the orchestra in Dresden, he published an edition of this celebrated "Stabat Mater" by Palestrina, arranged for concert performance.\* But it is certainly most curious

\* This edition of Palestrina's Stabat Mater appeared at C. F. Kahnt's, in Leipzig. Wagner's work of adaptation consisted in this : Palestrina's original motet is written for eight voices, for a double choir of mixed voices, including sopranos, altos, and bass. Wagner rewrote the alto part for a tenor and arranged the two soprano parts to correspond. Furthermore, he indicated in the work the parts assigned to solo voices, and the entrances of the chorus and of the semi-chorus. Lastly, he accompanied the Latin text with a new German translation, of which he was the author,

that these Palestrina harmonics are even found in "Tannhäuser," as the conclusion of the short orchestral interlude which follows the recitative of the song to the "Evening Star," and immediately precedes the song itself.



Mr. W. Tappert, the scholarly and keen connoisseur of music at Berlin, relates a delightful anecdote in this connection: This harmonic succession seemed faulty to a certain choir-master, and he thought it his duty to correct it by introducing a chord of F major between the chord of E and that of D. Mr. Tappert declares that he has seen, in the theatre of a small, provincial German town, Wagner's score bearing this intelligent correction. The worthy leader of the orchestra had probably never heard a note of Palestrina's music in his life.

It is not necessary, however, to go back so far in order to find analogous successions. They are met with in the modern composers. Liszt, for instance, in the "Dante Symphony," goes so far as to write a suite of *seven* perfect major chords with a descending bass. The effect is strange. In the "Gran Mass" he employs, in the same way, a succession of unrelated chords and which follows the original very closely. There is another Stabat Mater by Palestrina, for three choruses, but it is much less known. Both are in a minor key.

to characterize the idea of the Holy Trinity, particularly of God the Father. (See the Kyrie and Credo). But it is even more interesting to note that Donizetti also uses these Palestrina harmonics in—"The Child of the Regiment." See the prayer of the women which opens the first act :

Holy Madonna,  
' Sweet protectrice.

There they are !

But let us return to Parsifal to note, a few measures after the phrase we have just cited, the delicious symphonic fragment which accompanies Kundry's by-play as she goes to the spring to draw water, and describes a figure advancing through the wood. The phrase which the strings give out here is a fragment of the sweet and penetrating melody that subsequently accompanies the Good-Friday scene (LVI.). It is abruptly interrupted by the Parsifal fanfare. For it is indeed he, who in full armor, lance in hand, and with lowered visor, draws near the personages on the stage. This motive appears, this time, in a minor key, accented by portions of the motive of Distress (XLV.), and terminating in sad harmonics that tell by what sentiments he is animated.

The touchingly beautiful scene of the adoration of the spear and of Gurnemanz's recognition of Parsifal, brings back familiar motives (those of the Spear, of the Eucharist, of the Grail, and of Pity), among which the motive of Distress frequently recurs, *diminuendo*.

## LII.



The latter is joined, during Parsifal's narration, with the chromatic arrangements that recall the lament of the Flower maidens and the motive of Amfortas's Suffering.

When Parsifal finally tells that he has brought back the spear which Klingsor had stolen, not long ago, the wood instruments solemnly intone the Grail motive, accompanied by a descending arrangement of incisive and vigorous rhythm on the bass viols.

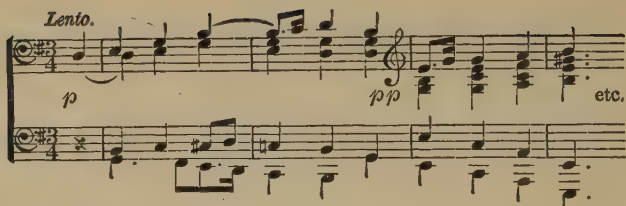
Gurnemanz's reply, telling his guest of the misfortunes of the order, leads us, through the familiar themes evoked by the story, to Parsifal's pathetic exclamations: "It is I, I who have caused this distress!" He feels himself fainting; Kundry then hastens to draw water from the neighboring spring.

The orchestra, during this by-play, repeats twice (p. 230) the motive already heard in the preceding act (XLIII.), as Kundry says, imploringly, to Parsifal: "Let me weep upon thy breast!" The poetic idea which brings this motive out at this juncture is the most delicate in the world.

Immediately afterward, a beautiful phrase of great breadth (p. 240):



## LIII.



introduces the scene of the “Baptism” and the Consecration. In this scene the orchestra plays an important part. The characters have very little to say, but, on the other hand, they act a great deal. It was an opportunity for the musician to prove the expressive power of music, and he has succeeded in painting the sentiments of these three characters with an admirable strength of tone and exquisite tenderness.

To the phrase we have just given, which resolves itself into the Palestrina harmonics, cited above, the following new theme immediately succeeds:

## LIV.



Mr. von Wolzogen calls it the melody of Purification. It really appears when Gurnemanz says to Parsifal

“ Let him be pure and washed from all the stains of his long errantry.”

To this melody the following is welded, which belongs to the same class of ideas :

LV.



And upon these three motives the beautiful picture of the washing of his feet and of Parsifal's consecration is unfolded. When, later, Gurnemanz places his hand upon the hero's brow and pronounces these words :

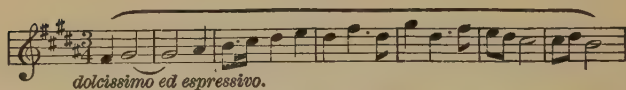
“ Aye, thus it was foretold me.  
My blessing on thy head,” etc.

the trumpets, horns, and trombones play the Parsifal motive in the stirring key of B major. It is a solemn moment, and one of unutterable grandeur. The Parsifal motive is developed here to a period full of magnificence, terminating, in a lofty manner, in the Grail motive given out *fortissimo*, by the whole orchestra. Then a series of harmonics lead us back to the motive of Baptism (LIII.) and to the delicious phrase of faith (V.), as Parsifal pours the shining water upon Kundry's brow.

Then the hero turns slowly to the meadow, resplendent in the light of the sun and all covered with flowers unfolding their chalices. From the orchestra rises, like

a hymn of earnest and tender gratitude, an exquisite melody given out by the oboe and the flute, and sustained by the murmur of the stringed instruments muffled by sordines.

## LVI.

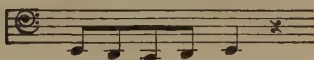


It is the *Good-Friday Spell*. The melodic arrangement of the phrase given above can furnish no idea—it is needless to say—of the penetrating beauty of this symphonic intermezzo. The piece includes more than a hundred measures; and in its development many familiar motives and arrangements are blended (“Kundry’s Sigh,” the Eucharist motive, the Spear motive, the harmonies of the Grail, the lament of the Flower maidens), all of which are finally absorbed in the melody of Good Friday. For charm of inspiration, for delicacy of harmonics, and for the incomparable development given to the voices and motives, this page is a master-piece in the master-piece called “Parsifal.”

Suddenly, this pastoral is interrupted by the distant sound of bells. We have now reached a scene similar to that which we saw unfold in the first act. “Noontide! The hour is come!” says Gurnemanz, “Permit thy servant to conduct thee.” And as before, the venerable knight takes his way toward the temple of the Grail, with Parsifal and Kundry. Only, the pilgrims

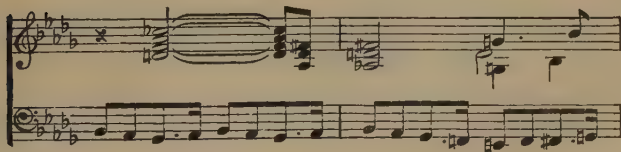
are accompanied now by songs of sadness, as they ascend to the sanctuary. Titurel is dead, and Parsifal is no longer the innocent youth of former days. Therefore the interlude played during this change of scene has an entirely different character from that of the first act ; it is sombre, sad, and solemn like a funeral march. Instead of the Bell motive, the following arrangement serves as the restrained bass during the whole development of this grand and beautiful symphonic page.

LVII.



The gloomy Parsifal motive (minor) is combined with the piercing harmonics of the second Herzeleide motive :

LVIII.



a beautiful idea which tells us all the emotion the hero feels.

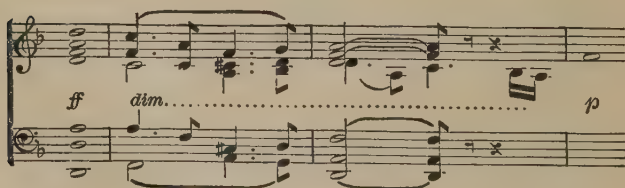
Then reappear the motives of Distress of the Order of the Grail (much changed), and of the Knights (VIII.), while the four notes of the Bell motive are given out persistently in the bass. Only these four notes (C, G, A, E) occurring here in the key of E minor, while

in the first act they were in the key of C major, have necessarily a wholly dissimilar signification and aspect.

The entrance of the knights, too, although identical with the march they executed in the first act, is performed now to new themes. The chorus is divided into two groups, one of which, that of the knights carrying Titurel's coffin, replies to the questions asked by the group accompanying the litter of Amfortas. Very skilfully has Wagner blended, with the monotonous lamentations of the latter, the Grail harmonics and a fragment of the motive of the Distress of the Order with the reversed Bell motive (p. 201, last line). This whole entry is strikingly grand in its sadness.

But it is as nothing compared with the tragic lament of the unfortunate king, whom the knights press vehemently to discharge his office for the last time. This page is one of the most admirable inspirations of Wagner, whose works include so many surprising ones. This lament is introduced by the following theme :

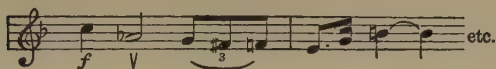
## LIX.



to which is afterward joined the expressive variation of the Faith motive (XV.) already heard in the first act,

then the piercing harmonies of Herzeleide's lament (XXIX.), the harsh, dominant seventh often employed in the scenes between Klingsor and Kundry, and reminiscences of the harmonics of the Oracle, which symbolize the deceived hope of the unfortunate king, who vainly calls for death and the promised redeemer. The conclusion of this arioso is founded entirely upon the motive of Amfortas's Suffering (IX.) with this new ending :

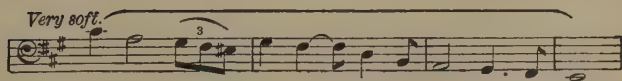
## LX.



which seems like the king's revolt against his sad destiny.

Suddenly, the consolatory harmonies of the Grail (in A major key) rise softly from the orchestra. Parsifal has advanced, bearing the lance, which he bends toward Amfortas. Then the Suffering motive, given out by the violoncellos and sustained by triplets in the wood instruments, is transformed anew as follows :

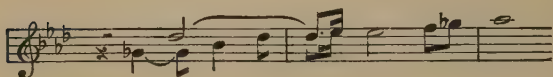
## LXI.



As though softened, it is united to the Promise motive. The miracle of Pity has been performed. Touched by

the iron point of the spear, Amfortas's wound closes and the king is healed. The whole orchestra gives out the Parsifal motive with superb effect ; it rises like a hymn to the hero. But the motive does not terminate with the conclusion it had heretofore ; it is resolved into the harmonics after Palestrina's form, already given. Then while Parsifal elevates the spear, the Eucharist modified thus :

## LXII.



and becoming thereby the Redemption motive, then the variation of the Faith motive (XV.), and the Spear motive (VII.) intertwine closely, and condense in a few measures all the impressions and the sentiments of the hero and of those who surround him.

Meanwhile Parsifal has ascended the steps of the altar, and it is he now who elevates the sacred chalice. And so, during the adoration, we do not hear the motives of the Eucharist and of Pity, as in the first act, but the Grail motive and the Faith motive, surrounded by sparkling arpeggios on the harp, and connected with the Redemption motive (XLII.).

The white dove descends from the cupola and hovers above the new king, in a dazzling ray of light. Softly the choruses repeat the melody of the Oracle ; but, the





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THE HALL OF THE GRAIL. Act I, Scene 2; Act III, Scene 2.

See pp. 124, 152, etc.





promise now having been fulfilled, the harmonics of the Oracle lead to the Redemption motive (XLII.) repeated from octave to octave, first by men's voices, then by the voices of youths, finally by children's voices, from the summit of the cupola. "Salvation to the Saviour!" sing the voices. Like incense of sound, these words ascend by degrees to the ethereal spheres. The angelic sound of the children's voices floats down for some time sustaining the high A like a superior pedal-note, while, for the last time, the delicious melody of the Faith motive recurs in the orchestra (violins, trumpets, and harps), terminating in the Redemption motive magnificently set in the harmonics of the Grail motive.

And the work closes, as it began, with the restful harmonies of the perfect chord of A flat major, which thus gives the final seal to its poetic and musical unity.

I do not flatter myself that this analysis will open a new horizon to musicians who have read the score. I address myself rather to those who, not knowing the work as yet, but desiring to know it, might experience some apprehension in approaching a work which is apparently so complicated, but so clear and simple in reality. I would also reach that still larger class of amateurs who, sincerely in love with art, require but a brief intimation in order to become familiar with a score that is reputed excessively difficult. Many of its pages, indeed, may appear abstruse when first read at

the piano. Once this first and superficial impression overcome, you will be surprised to see how many things that at the beginning seemed insurmountable difficulties, will become clear and delightful. And on the day that you hear these things performed by the orchestra, for which they were thought and written, not one obscurity will remain.

The orchestration of "Parsifal" is the richest and most varied we have. In it Wagner has preserved the grouping, by families, of the different classes of instruments, that he had already made use of in "Tristan" and the "Nibelungen Ring." This is one of the innovations introduced by him into the art of instrumentation. The quintette of tubas that figures in the "Nibelungen" is not employed, however, in "Parsifal." The orchestra, in addition to the string quintette, is composed of four flutes, four oboes, two alto oboes, four clarinettes, one bass clarinette, four bassoons, one double-bassoon, seven horns, three trumpets, four trombones, one bass-tuba, four harps and kettle-drums. In the combination of these various instruments of sound, Wagner displays an extraordinary fertility of resource and flexibility of handling, so that in this respect "Parsifal" need not give way to the master's earlier scores. If it differ from them, it may be perhaps in its greater simplicity of instrumentation and less affectation in the use of the bells. But this is in keeping with the very character of the work.

The same observation may be applied to the harmony in "Parsifal." Wagner has long been regarded as a revolutionist in this respect, an enemy to all conservatism, unconcerned about rules, thinking little of all the laws of harmony. There is much exaggeration in this censure, and still more of prejudice. Wagner, to the contrary, always claimed to belong to the classic school. Undoubtedly his works are more complicated than Mozart's or Haydn's; but it is a mistake to believe his harmonics more difficult than those of Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, and of other modern innovators, or even than those of the venerable Sebastian Bach, the father of German music. Even in Beethoven's sonatas and quartettes we find things infinitely more difficult. In proportion to the condition of musical science at the time of his appearance, we may even boldly affirm that Wagner was less of an innovator than were Mozart and Beethoven in their time.

Wagner, it is true, was fond of employing chromatic melodies; he delighted in dissonant harmonies, whether natural or artificial, and unharmonic modulations abound in "Parsifal," as in his other scores; but there is nothing subversive in that; the majority of the formulas which he employed had long been known and treated *ex professo* in all schools of harmony. It may be that at a first reading or hearing, the frequency of *ritardandos* and anticipations, of modulations upon arpeggios, of modulating progressions, and of arrangements of sevenths

resolving into one another, may cause confusion; but this impression is unimportant. Modulation by change or by unharmony are no harder to the ear than are natural modulations. Indeed, most of the former are infinitely more delicate, and some have even an extraordinary charm. Their judicious use counts for much in the prodigious effect that certain of Wagner's pages have always produced upon the auditors least prejudiced in his favor.

Where Wagner has been a real innovator, is in his system of composition to which he bound himself as a dramatic author. I refer to the use and the trituration of motives. He does not combine them according to harmonic, rhythmic, or melodic affinity, but according to the poetic meaning he gives them. In this way his motives are most frequently juxtaposed by a dramatic necessity, entirely apart from their natural musical function. Through this, Wagner's style is essentially distinguished from the so-called symphonic style.\*

\* The name of *Leitmotiv*, given to his themes, indicates in advance that, in his mind, they were to fulfil a more special and precise function than that of the simple *musical* themes, such as are found in their development and infinite variety in the works of the earlier masters. To-day, everybody discovers that the *Leitmotiv* existed long before Wagner's time, in the works of Weber, Mozart, Gluck, Beethoven, nay, even of Meyerbeer and Donizetti. The truth is that the *Leitmotiv*, as an element of composition, is as old as the *fugue*, the subjects and counter-subjects of which are nothing else than genuine Leitmotive. Only the Wagnerian *Leitmotiv* differs essentially from the subject of a fugue in the character given it by the author, and the purpose he makes it subserve;

The composer of a symphony is untrammelled in his developments. He selects his themes with reference to their association with other themes and with subordinate subjects which he combines freely, while conforming, however, to a certain symmetry that is indispensable to the rhythmic balance of the composition. In the dramatic style, as Wagner conceived it, this liberty no longer exists in such completeness; the succession and repetition of motives are no longer governed by the composer's fancy, but are ruled by the association of ideas to which each theme refers.

We know not which to admire more in Wagner's score, whether the surprising relief and originality of the majority of his typical themes, or the immense ability and skill he constantly exercises in solving the harmonic problems which must have confronted him at every measure; and all this, without weakening the wealth of musical discourse or breaking the continuity of the inspiration for a single instant.

There is in this a miracle of genius, the miracle that

whence arises the new musical form, the Wagnerian form. This *intentional* phase of the motive, that is, of a succession of sound applied to the expression of a dramatic action, has been presented for the first time, perhaps, by Lessing. On this subject, see the very interesting little book by L. Wallner (Brussels, 1890), entitled "Scheibe and Lessing, on the Reform of the Theatrical Symphony," in which the author sets forth briefly, but with all desirable clearness, the filiation and the development of the *Leitmotiv* down to its complete and logical application in Wagner's works.

ever astonishes by its mysterious fertility. It is marvelous to see what he succeeds in achieving with the aggregations of familiar and noted sounds; how he changes the ordinary function of an altered note into classic resolutions, and by what unexpected and ever original combinations he impresses an expressive character upon things which seem devoid of life and meaning.

Through this he belongs to the race of great writers whose pens know how to transform the simplest and most ordinary words into florid, graphic, or strong expressions. He belongs to their line as poet and musician in one. Inasmuch as he has introduced new and entirely original forms and combinations, that were peculiar to him, into the harmony and the orchestra, inasmuch he has added to the German language and literature.

It would be an interesting subject of study to develop the twofold influence of his works upon musicians and writers. But it is too early to note with accuracy all that contemporaneous art, music, drama, poetry, and novel, owe to the irresistible impulse given them by this powerful brain.

For the present, it will suffice to indicate this influence. As to describing it, that will be the task of the future.

## CONCLUSION.

HAVING reached the end of this long labor, I break off with difficulty, as one reluctantly leaves a magnificent view in nature, or a friend whose soul has become a part of one's own. We must always suffer somewhat from too intimate an intercourse with master-pieces. They take possession of us and absorb us so completely that it seems as though we had lost our freedom to breathe, when we are about to tear ourselves away.

We retain a sort of apprehension, something akin to pain, that revives at the recollection of delights already experienced, as we feel ourselves gradually penetrated and seized by the eloquence of genius. What delicious hours are spent, after the first revelation at Bayreuth, in studying the work more closely than we witnessed and heard there as a new and unprepared spectator !

And what joy, as we penetrate further into the conception of the drama and the music, to find marvellous details at every step, to discover grandeur in the veriest minutiae, to take up one by one the profound words, the exquisite harmonies, and the powerful thoughts that were barely suspected in the first fascination of this grand poesy !



Now all those keen emotions and unaffected joys are at an end ; the work lies before me, analyzed and dissected, as beautiful, to be sure, as it was before, but contemplated from a colder and more distant point of view. There is no longer the spontaneity of admiration given without reflection. And this makes me confess to feeling a sort of envy of those who, having as yet neither heard nor seen "*Parsifal*," have still the hope of all the artistic delights that have passed for the initiated, and, although capable of being renewed, have, really, lost their first bloom forever.

Probably those who will come after us will never understand the base and spiteful attacks of which Wagner was the object, nor the extraordinary enthusiasm which this present generation feels for the great artist.

We have had a similar condition of spirit with regard to Beethoven and Mozart, who have never impressed us so deeply as they did the men of the beginning of this century, the youths of 1830. What a revelation of art for them, what an outburst of poetry existed in the nine symphonies, in the quartettes, in "*Fidelio*," "*Don Juan*," and the "*Requiem* ! "

Glincka, crying like a child as he heard Beethoven's last quartette ; Berlioz, suffering from hunger, yet obsessed by the image of him whom he called the Titan ; Liszt, travelling for an entire year in order to gather the necessary funds, from his concerts, to erect

a statue to him ; Wagner himself, copying the entire score of the ninth symphony with his own hands, and learning it by heart ; this is a devotion which we can share, but in which our ardor will never equal the enthusiasm of our predecessors.

Happy are they who are born at the time when Wagner's genius has risen in all its fulness. They will have experienced artistic joys without a parallel, which their successors will never feel.

To Schopenhauer is attributed this profound but saddening saying : " Every master-piece creates a pouncing paper." Already Wagner imitators overwhelm us, and in twenty years we shall have to seek for the author of " Parsifal " through these *pouncing papers*, just as we had to rediscover Beethoven and Mozart through Hummel, Ries, Hiller, Spohr, and all the host of imitators.

It will be the same with Wagner, now admired so immensely, after having been so long a victim, in his noblest aspirations, to the folly, the envy, and the barren scepticism of the salons, that vanished without leaving even a trace of their sting. He will be admired as one of the finest men of genius that art has raised above mankind ; but this admiration will not have the disconcerting surprises which stirred us so violently as we beheld the development and growth of his powerful and varied work which include these marvels, " Lohengrin," " Tristan," " Die Walküre," " Siegfried," " Die Meistersinger," to culminate in " Parsifal."

For the rest, the judgment of posterity concerns us very little, and we need not pay any attention to it.

Whatever it may be, it cannot change the fact that these works have transported us with enthusiasm, nor that "Parsifal" has been the deepest and most striking impression of art that the present generation has experienced.

And that suffices us.

Deeply moving by the sentiments it touches within us, dramatic in the loftiest sense of the word through the importance and force of the conflicts with passion which it sets forth ; human, and largely so, through the great philosophic thought it develops, "Parsifal" is a work in which are combined all kinds of beauty : the striking and perfect beauty of form, the moral and poetic beauty of conception.

In this work Richard Wagner has really attained the supreme grandeur of the dream of man.

"Parsifal" is his artistic testament. According to appearances it will remain the artistic testament of this glorious nineteenth century, whose dawn beheld the birth of "Faust" and of the nine symphonies, whose apogee produced the "Legend of the Centuries," and whose decline is illuminated with the dazzling beams of the new art created at Bayreuth. ९, 5

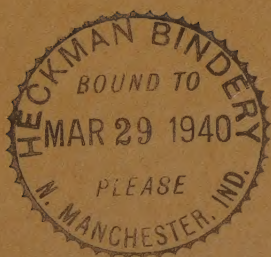




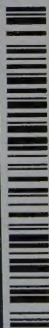












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